

THE THEOLOGY *of* RELIGIOUS VOCATION

BY

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I. Introduction

I. AIMS

A. *Primary.* The primary aim of this work is to evolve from the more or less speculative theological doctrine concerned with religious vocation practical, workable principles, as immediately proximate to action as possible, which can be used profitably by confessors and spiritual directors in their task of guiding prospective candidates for the religious state.

Two elements of this aim must be singled out at once for special attention. First, only prospective candidates, and not individuals who have entered a novitiate, are to be considered. Consequently the principles elaborated are not intended to apply to the work of novice masters or mistresses in guiding a novice or in judging upon one's suitability for profession. True enough, much of what will be presented will have its application within a novitiate; but this is solely the result of the universal scope of various principles based upon theological elements pertaining to the essence of a religious vocation and therefore common to it in all stages of its development. Neither the novice nor his master, then, but the prospective candidate and his spiritual guide constitute the particular subjects envisioned in this

aim. The distinction is important, and separate consideration is demanded; for, as will be indicated later, the basic viewpoint of a novice master should differ radically from that of a confessor or director dealing with an untested religious vocation.

Secondly, the principles evolved are strictly and exclusively theological in character. That they are treated here as holding undisputed sway in judging the existence of a religious vocation and in cultivating an already existing vocation needs no apology. That they alone are applied to solve various practical cases concerned with counseling a candidate to enter, or to reconsider entering, a religious institute requires a word of explanation.

Principles are penetrated intellectually when they are seen in their manifold, concrete applications. Hence it was deemed opportune, if not actually necessary, for right understanding of these fundamental conceptions, to run the gamut of application down to practical cases of more or less common occurrence. It need hardly be stressed that such a process engenders a clash of diverse sets of principles, all applicable in their own right; and consequently to single out one set, and this alone, is to present the spectacle of an attempt to force the infinite possibilities of the individual into a strait jacket. We need but recall that someone, somewhere, somehow, will have to pay for an economically unproductive novice's upkeep and training—a comparatively base, but basic consideration—to envision

one of many areas of possible conflict among principles applicable to religious vocation.

The fact that other applicable sets of principles are not introduced and put to work in solving cases, therefore, is definitely a defect. But a pardonable one, it is hoped; since to have ventured this, would have been to attempt the almost impossible. What has been done, has been done because theological principles are of primary importance in the matter of religious vocation. As a consequence, solutions of cases based upon these fundamentals enjoy the highest degree of probability possible in this matter, presupposing, of course, a correct application. Briefly, then, the solutions offered possess the prerogatives of a monarch; for they are the offspring of regal parents whose role it is to rule until their exclusive right is challenged legitimately by another set of principles which demand application.

B. Secondary. Secondarily, both necessary to the primary goal and limited by the demands of that goal, an attempt has been made to order, crystallize, and make explicit a body of Thomistic doctrine on religious vocation. The elements of this teaching are scattered throughout the theological and polemical works of St. Thomas, developed only to the extent required by the nature of the question he is treating or the objection he is answering. As exposition will make clear, this core of doctrine contains not only the basic truths about the nature and properties of religious vocation but also

several prudential principles of varying degrees: some requiring nothing more than a survey of existing, concrete conditions to become applicable in all their rigor; others demanding a further step of reasoning to become immediately proximate to action.

II. UTILITY

In view of the needs of the Church and the faithful today, a presentation of workable principles on religious vocation based upon solid theological doctrine ought certainly to be of considerable value. That the Church in America needs new recruits to swell the ranks of her religious reserves is a fact well attested to by the results of surveys made during the last few years.¹ Simply to hold their own, the various religious institutes must increase substantially the present number of their postulants and candidates. In short, it is a question of increasing numbers or curtailing the apostolic work of preaching, teaching, and ministering to the faithful. In this search for quantity, however, quality must not be allowed to suffer; not even the threat of diminishing numbers will justify the raising of the barriers to admit the unfit.

Hence recruiting campaigns have been begun by several institutes; and it is not unreasonable to expect

¹ Cf. Most Rev. Emmett M. Walsh, "Vocation Needs"; Rt. Rev. Thomas J. McDonnell, "The Vineyard of Christ at Home and Abroad Needs More Servants of God"; Rev. Aloysius F. Coogan, "The Need for Vocations" all these articles are in *The Missionary Union of the Clergy Bulletin*, June, 1946 and July, 1947. See also Rev. William J. Ferree, S.M., "Church's Need of Vocations," *The National Catholic Educational Bulletin*, XLI (1944), 289-98.

that many others will join with these in their attempt to interest youth in the religious life and the apostolate, preferably their own form, naturally. This is a work in which errors are costly; and the costs are measured not only in funds poured out lavishly in exploiting modern means of propagandizing, but also in the eternal destiny of souls. Definitely, then, a precise knowledge of the theological realities involved in religious vocation must be possessed by those who are engaged in the work of recruiting and counseling candidates for the religious life.

Unfortunately, however, this precision is not so readily attainable as we would expect in a matter of this importance. To consult the tracts on religious vocation in the classical manuals of moral theology is to court confusion; authors are not all agreed, even on essentials. In fact, the whole question of vocation has become the subject of a confusing controversy during the past four decades with various schools of thought taking positions in opposing camps. Each faction has its arguments to sustain its own theory and refutations to undermine contrary opinions. Again, the authority of the same doctors of the Church is claimed by authors proposing radically diverse theories.² Deprived of easily consulted

² For example, St. Thomas is listed by Vermeersch as a proponent of the general, and not the special, vocation theory; and for Vermeersch, St. Alphonsus is the founder of the latter theory. Cf. Rev. A. Vermeersch, S.J., *Religious and Ecclesiastical Vocation*, pp. 26 ff. Again, Canon Lahitton presents St. Thomas and interprets St. Alphonsus as holding that vocation taken strictly is external rather than internal. Cf. Lahitton, *La vocation sacerdotale* (new ed., Paris, 1913), pp. 214-16, 218 f. Finally, the theologians of the nineteenth century

sources and the authority of competent moralists, the hard-pressed campaigner for religious recruits must fall back upon his own resources to establish for himself a norm of judgment and a principle of order. Should he be gifted with an acute critical faculty, he may disentangle the maze of theological opinion and find the central skein which gives meaning and order to the whole question. Lacking this endowment, he will dissipate much of his energy and endanger the futures of those he advises by following a "muddling-through" policy. The justification of this study, therefore, is to be found in the needs of the times and in the unfortunately confused state of theological thought on the question of religious vocation.

III. PROCEDURE

The supplying of the need for practical norms cannot, of course, be attempted without a grasp of the essential notion of religious vocation, a matter demanding a critical survey of contemporary opinions in order to uncover the source of the confusion and to separate the true from the false. Consequently, in the first chapter the various opinions on the nature of vocation are reviewed, analyzed, and criticized. The scholastic axiom, "the solution of difficulties is the discovery of the truth," has regulated the selection and the treatment of the material for this chapter. Thus the fundamental teaching of the various schools has been presented both in the

who proposed a special internal vocation of a mystical nature considered themselves as faithfully following St. Alphonsus.

light of the searching questions and problems, and of the objective difficulties proposed in regard to the nature of religious vocation. Then the arguments of the respective schools are stated summarily and criticized in the light of common theological principles to discern in each the element of truth from that of error. In this way the factors of the problem are introduced gradually, and at the same time appear the outlines, however vague they may be, of a solution. A careful reading of this chapter will make manifest the objective difficulties involved in the question of religious vocation and will prepare the mind to grasp the full value of the solution as it is evolved within the framework of the Thomistic synthesis.

Since chapter 2 begins the scientific treatment of the subject, it is concerned solely with establishing a nominal definition of religious vocation and indicating the end or final cause of such a divine call. Continuing the scientific portion of the tract, chapters 3 and 4 are devoted to an analysis of the nature and subject of religious vocation (the material and formal causes), from which the universal principles regulative of practice are derived and then applied in the final chapter, which treats of the efficient cause of religious vocation.

II. Divergent Theories of Religious Vocation

I. THE PROBLEM

On the question of religious vocation all are agreed that a candidate must be called by God to be admitted lawfully into a religious institute. But how God calls, and how it can be known whom He has called, questions which touch upon the very nature of a divine vocation, receive widely differing answers. The problem of religious vocation is consequently not concerned with the existence, or even with the necessity, of a divine invitation, but with its essence. Simply enough, unanimity is present in regard to the fact; diversity of opinion arises in regard to the nature of religious vocation.

Were this diversity limited to matters of accidental detail, a re-examination of principles admitted by all and a more rigid application of them to the various elements involved in a religious vocation might well suffice to settle the matters of dispute. At the very least, such a procedure would distinguish the certain from the probable and thereby determine the province within which an expression of opinion and the testing of arguments for degrees of probability would be valid.

Mere accidentals, however, are involved only secondarily; whereas the crux of the problem centers in the very substance of vocation. Is it something internal, i.e., a grace infused into the soul by God; or is it external, an invitation of a legitimate superior to embrace the religious life? Again, granted that a grace is involved, is this gift of God a special one; or is it a decidedly ordinary grace, one common to the Christian life, which can be channeled off in some way to carry its recipient into a novitiate?

There are some who believe that this phrasing of the problem is no longer valid. For them, vocation is no longer a matter of debate, no longer a problem to be solved. As they see it, the question has been settled once and for all by the well-known decree of the Holy See (July, 1912) singling out for special commendation three propositions expressed in Canon Lahitton's celebrated book, *La vocation sacerdotale*,¹ that dealt the death-blow to a theory of vocation which had held an almost completely undisputed sway among spiritual writers and moral theologians for three centuries, the attraction theory.²

¹ The book, decree, and proponents of this theory will be considered when the external vocation theory is subject to analysis.

² Although the phrase "attraction theory" is inadequate to express all the nuances of the term used by the French spiritual writers who popularized this theory during the past two centuries, usage among modern English authors has sanctioned this way of designating this theory.

II. THE VARIOUS SOLUTIONS

A. *The attraction theory.*

1. Doctrine

The proponents of this theory maintained that a vocation to the priesthood or to the religious life is a divine call addressed immediately to a man's soul, urging him instinctively, or perhaps even sensibly, as it were, by a secret voice to enter the clerical or religious state. Since young people may be deceived in feeling that this secret voice is whispering in their souls, certain signs are needed through which they can determine whether this voice is real or imaginary. Holding first place among these signs is a peculiar supernatural attraction, a strong and permanent inclination, or a sweet impulse which is felt in the depths of the soul and leaves little or no doubt that they have been called by God.³ Unless a person is

³ Cf. A. J. T. F. Haine, *Theologiae moralis elementa*, II, 255. The first sign of vocation is a special attraction, in some supernatural, to a particular state. This attraction should be sweet and constant, and should proceed from a right intention. Cf. also Francisco de Larraga, O.P., *Prontuario de theologia moral*, p. 648. What is a religious vocation? It is that desire, that internal impulse, by which an individual senses that he has been called to religion. Among the signs of vocation listed by Father de Larraga, special importance is assigned to a constant inclination or attraction. This attraction is the effect of God's operations in the soul directing it to eternal salvation. Despite this sweetness of God's movement, the person may experience a natural repugnance toward the religious life. Cf. also Rev. Jos. Aertnys, C.S.S.R., *Theologia moralis*, I, 427 ff.; Rev. Augustinus Lehmkuhl, *Theologia moralis*, I, 305 ff.; Rev. Clement Marc, C.S.S.R., *Institutiones morales Alphonstanae*, II, 607; Rev. J. P. Gury, S.J., *Compendium theologiae moralis*, II, 61; Rev. A. Sabetti, S.J., *Compendium theologiae moralis*, pp. 436 ff.; Rev. Alphonse Mulders, *La vocation au sacerdoce*, pp. 32 ff., may be consulted profitably for a more extensive list of proponents of this theory.

conscious of this divine impulse which carries the soul along with it, he may not even consider becoming a candidate for the religious or clerical state. On the other hand, anyone who has been moved this way and enlightened divinely, obtains a right to demand that the doors of the cloister be opened to admit him.⁴ Such is the substance of the attraction theory.

⁴ In giving this outline of the elements of the attraction theory we have summarized the account presented by Canon Lahitton, *op. cit.*, pp. 6 ff., and Rev. John Blowick, *Priestly Vocation* (Dublin, 1932), pp. 42 ff., who follows Canon Lahitton in this regard. We have not, however, discovered any author on religious vocation who has adhered to all the elements of the attraction theory as enumerated by Canon Lahitton. Moreover, those who have investigated the matter of sacerdotal vocation have discovered also that the Canon does not give a thoroughly accurate statement of this theory as proposed by the various authors he has attacked. (Cf. Mulders, *op. cit.*, pp. 54 ff.; Rev. F. J. Hurtaud, O.P., *La vocation au sacerdoce* [Paris, 1911], pp. 9 ff.) Thus no author has been found who has suggested that a candidate for the religious life or the priesthood has a right to ordination or admittance to a novitiate previous to the canonical call of the ordaining bishop or, in the case of religious, admission by competent superiors. Father Hurtaud in crystallizing the teaching of those who affirmed the necessity of an internal vocation has shown that this position in no way entails the necessity of affirming such a right (*op. cit.*, p. 441), and Father Mulders insists that "on this precise point there has never been any doctrinal difference between Canon Lahitton and his adversaries" (*op. cit.*, p. 63).

Why, then, did the Canon insist that the interior-vocation theory included this anterior right as one of its chief elements? A twofold possibility is suggested. Throughout the work the Canon is preoccupied with developing the logical consequences of maintaining the attraction theory; for him the theory must conclude to a right to ordination previous to the canonical call. Father Mulders proposes another possible answer, based not on the logic of the theory but upon existing circumstances: "Is it possible that there have been in France or elsewhere some seminarians who have presumed, in the name of divine Providence, to force their bishops' hand?" (*op. cit.*, p. 63.) Whatever the Canon's reason for including this element, the fact remains that he did present it as a factor of the attraction theory and that the Commission of Cardinals who examined his works have praised him for

2. Arguments

This teaching is founded upon a threefold series of arguments taking as their starting points respectively divine providence, the words and example of Christ and the apostles, and finally the practice of the Church. All arguments conclude to the necessity of a special, internal divine vocation as opposed to a general and external invitation extended to all Christians; and this special calling by God is further interpreted as a spiritual, mystical attraction.

a. *Proofs from divine providence.* Two arguments are constructed upon the theological idea of divine providence and government.

1. In the natural order all things are governed by God, each according to its nature; *a fortiori* the same principle holds in the supernatural order, and as applied to the question of religious vocation demands that an individual be called by God in a special way to this more excellent state.⁵

denying any such right. Accordingly we have included this factor in the outline of the attraction theory, for without mention of it the decision of the Commission would not be intelligible to the reader. An account of the other elements of the attraction theory may be found in Rev. L. Branchereau, *De la vocation sacerdotale* (Paris, 1896). It will be seen that Branchereau has used somewhat metaphorical and exaggerated expressions to describe the *attrait*. Nevertheless the other aspects of his doctrine, including the necessity of an episcopal call, do attenuate somewhat the excessive importance he and others have attached to attraction.

⁵ Cf. Rev. J. P. Gury, S.J., *op. cit.*, p. 60: The existence of a divine vocation is certain, leaving no room to doubt that God in His most benign providence has called certain individuals in preference to

2. To embrace the religious state and persevere in it certain graces, which God alone can dispense, are necessary. These graces, however, are granted only to those whom God has called to this state.⁶

b. *Proofs from Sacred Scriptures.* The second series of arguments draws from the pages of the New Testament the words and example of Christ, which are interpreted as indicating either that the religious life is reserved to a few chosen ones or is too exacting a life to be followed by the many.

1. A recurring theme centers in the fact that Christ personally called only a handful to imitate Him by observing the counsels.⁷

2. Again, Christ in proposing the evangelical counsels expressly acknowledged that not all would find themselves capable of persevering: "All men take not this word [continency], but they to whom it is given. . . . He that can take it, let him take it." * -

3. Lastly, Christ's words to His disciples, "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you," * show that God

others to a more excellent and more perfect state. For, since all things in the natural order are governed by God in a way proper to each, *a fortiori* in the supernatural order God's government respects the nature of His creatures. Cf. also Rev. P. Scavini, *Theologia moralis universa* (3rd ed., Milan, 1860), I, 341; Lehmkuhl, *op. cit.*, p. 305; Konings, *op. cit.*, p. 1150; Sabetti, *op. cit.*, p. 436; Gury-Ballerini, *op. cit.*, II, 92.

* All as in the preceding note.

† Cf. Rev. Piato Montensi, O.F.M. Cap., *Praelectiones iuris regularis* (Tours, 1906), I, 36-38. The following arguments record substantially those listed by this author.

* Cf. Lehmkuhl, *op. cit.*, I, 305; Aertnys, *op. cit.*, I, 427. The text, "All men take not," is from Matt. 19:11.

* John 15:16.

in a special way singles out those whom He has chosen for the religious state.¹⁰

c. *Arguments from the practice of the Church.* Confirmatory arguments are derived from the practice of the Church down through the ages. Thus it is a fact of history repeated again and again that ecclesiastical authorities forbid entrance into religion, at least for a time, to certain individuals; a policy which would run contrary to Christ's, had He called all and not merely some to become religious. Furthermore, the rules and constitutions of the established orders and congregations, which have received ecclesiastical approbation, lay down definite conditions for entrance and require certain qualities in prospective candidates, a practice indicative of the Church's conviction that only those

¹⁰ Similar arguments are drawn from texts of St. Paul. First, in regard to continency: "For I would that all men were even as myself; but everyone hath his proper gift from God, one after this manner and another after that" (1 Cor. 7:7, 17). Secondly, in regard to divine election of candidates: "Neither doth any man take the honor to himself but he that is called by God, as Aaron was" (Heb. 5:4). Since St. Paul treats here of the priesthood, those who use this text in regard to the religious life argue that *a fortiori* a special divine vocation is required for the religious life, since this state is more perfect and more difficult than the priesthood. Cf. Gury, *loc. cit.*

This form of arguing from the priesthood to the religious life, a commonplace among the authors engaged in the controversy with Canon Lahitton and the writers of the preceding century, contains an error that passed unobserved during this whole period. The priesthood is a special office in the Church requiring special delegation; on the other hand, the religious life as such is not an office but a state of life. Hence what is said of the priesthood may not be applied to the religious life *a fortiori*. The principles governing delegation or election to an office are distinct from those applicable to the selection of a state of life, even as the nature of an office and a state of life differ. Separate consideration must be given to each.

called by God in a special way are fit subjects for the religious life.

3. Criticism

That there is some truth in these arguments is undeniable; that there is considerable error may not be overlooked. Nor has the error been overlooked. Theologians who favor the theory of a general or universal vocation have hammered insistently at the first and most glaring error, one of omission. The proofs offered fail to consider the series of scriptural texts recording the words of Christ inviting all to follow the way of perfection by observing the counsels. Thus Vermeersch argues that there is "a general counsel to practice continence, to give up all things, to follow Christ more perfectly—and this counsel is given to all. 'He that can take it, let him take it' (Matt. 19:12); 'Every one that has left house or brethren,' etc. (Matt. 19:29)." ¹¹ Again, the Apostle's counsel of virginity ¹² is addressed to all and presupposes that the power to persevere is not reserved solely to those who have received a special calling from God. ¹³ Finally, if the practice of the Church can be interpreted as indicating the necessity of a special vocation, it may also be viewed as pointing to a general call. Father Piato Montensi argues that the custom whereby parents placed

¹¹ Vermeersch, *op cit.*, p. 12; cf. also Piato, *op cit.*, p. 38, Rev James Harrison, O.P., "St. Thomas and Religious Life," *The Irish Ecclesiastical Record* (5th series), I (1913), 292, Rev. H. Davis, S.J., "Religious Vocation," *The Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, XII (1918), 100 ff.

¹² I Cor. 7:25 f.

¹³ Cf. Piato, *loc. cit.*

their sons in monasteries with the understanding that the boys, after they had reached the age of puberty, would be bound to enter the religious life, can neither be explained nor justified without recourse to the theory of a general vocation as opposed to a special vocation.¹⁴

No impasse has been reached by this balancing of textual arguments and proofs drawn from the practice of the Church. Rather, the necessity of distinction to preserve the truth of both series of arguments has become obvious. Definitely there is a general or universal call to the religious life recorded in the words of Scripture. Likewise sound theological principles require that the existence and the necessity of a special vocation, in the sense of a particular, internal grace, be adhered to tenaciously. Indeed, the arguments drawn from the mode of operation of divine providence and government and used by the proponents of the special-vocation theory are the unassailable theological proofs for the necessity of grace in every supernatural operation and for the fact that grace places something in the soul.¹⁵ These elements of truth in both theories must be preserved; and, as will be seen, are preserved, to be viewed in their proper perspective within the Thomistic doctrine on religious vocation. The general call is a true vocation but dispositively so; the special call is vocation in its strictest sense.

¹⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 39.

¹⁵ Cf. *Summa*, Ia IIae, q. 110, a. 1, 2.

Added to the attraction theory's error of omission, namely, the failure to consider that there is a general call, is another defect, a positive one: an unwarranted affirmation of the necessity of extraordinary, mystical phenomena as elements of a religious vocation. Truly a special vocation, in the sense of a particular, internal call, must be affirmed; but this kind of call differs totally from the various descriptive definitions given of *attrait*. Consequently the arguments adduced by the followers of this theory beg the question. Simply enough, they presuppose what must be proved, that extraordinary illuminating and impelling graces must be given by God to those who are called to the religious state.

It was against this latter factor of the attraction theory that Canon Lahitton, in the midst of an already heated controversy, marshaled all his forces. That he succeeded in destroying the excesses of this theory is a fact attested to by all who have reviewed the controversy; that he himself fell into another excess is not quite so frequently affirmed as the latter and more obvious fact, but definitely should be.

A storm of protest from French churchmen greeted the publication in 1909 of Canon Lahitton's now well-known *La vocation sacerdotale*. Shortly after the appearance of his second volume in the following year, *Deux conceptions divergentes de la vocation sacerdotale*, the Holy See appointed a commission to read and criticize the doctrine of Canon Lahitton and to report its findings. On July 1, 1912, the Cardinal Secretary of

State dispatched the following letter to Bishop de Cormont, of Aire: ¹⁶

Because of the dissension that has arisen on the occasion of the twofold work of Canon Joseph Lahitton on *Sacerdotal Vocation*, and because of the doctrinal question raised, Our Most Holy Father, Pope Pius X, has deigned to appoint a special Commission of the Most Eminent Cardinals.

This Commission, after having examined diligently the arguments in proof of each of the two theses, in a plenary meeting held on the 20th of June last, pronounced the following judgment: ¹⁷

The work of the outstanding man, Canon Joseph Lahitton, is in no way to be condemned. In fact it is to be praised highly when he says that:

1) No one ever has any right to ordination antecedently to the free choice of the bishop.

2) The requisite on the part of the one to be ordained, which is called sacerdotal vocation, does not at all consist, at least necessarily and ordinarily, in a certain internal attraction of the subject or in inducements of the Holy Spirit to enter the priesthood.

3) On the contrary, in order that one may be rightly called by the bishop, nothing further is necessary in the one to be ordained than the right intention together with suitability, founded upon those gifts of nature and grace and confirmed by probity of life and sufficiency of learning, which give well-founded hope that he will be able to fulfill the duties of the priestly state properly and observe the obligations of that state holily.

His Holiness Pius X, on the 26th of June, fully approved the

¹⁶ Cf. *A.A.S.*, IV (1912), 485. A second letter of Cardinal Merry del Val to Canon Lahitton relating that Pope Pius X had fully approved the decision of the Commission will be found in *A.A.S.*, V (1913), 290.

¹⁷ This introductory section is written in French as is also the conclusion. The judgment of the Commission is in Latin. For an analysis of the decree, see Mulders, *op. cit.*, pp. 60 ff.; Jean Baptiste Georges, *La vocation sacerdotale en droit ecclésiastique* (Quebec, 1948), pp. 23 ff.

decision of the Cardinals and charged me to give this notice to your Lordship, which you will please communicate to your subject, Canon Joseph Lahitton, and have inserted *in full* in the *Semaine Religieuse* of the diocese.

I pray your Lordship to accept the assurance of my sentiments of devotion in Our Lord.

R. Card. Merry del Val

As is obvious from perusal of the terms of the letter, this decree dealt the deathblow to the fundamental postulate of the attraction theory, that mystical element infused by the Holy Ghost and felt in the depths of the soul making the recipient profoundly certain that God has called him to the priesthood or religious life. Such an interior attraction does not, at least ordinarily or necessarily, constitute a divine vocation. This is the judgment of the Roman Commission, and it is to the credit of Canon Lahitton that he performed the yeoman's task of supplying the occasion, the impetus, and the necessary theological arguments to destroy the excesses of this theory.

But the decree is not a blanket endorsement of the whole book, *La vocation sacerdotale*. Rather the terms of the decisions state that this work is worthy of praise so far as it contains the three propositions singled out and formulated by the Commission, which for the most part embody the negative portion of Canon Lahitton's thesis. His positive teaching stands and falls on its own merits and defects.

B. *The external vocation theory.*

1. Doctrine

Owing to a misconception of the intended import of this decree of the Holy See, many maintain that it has been definitively decided that a priestly vocation consists properly and exclusively in the act of an ordaining bishop inviting a candidate to present himself for ordination.¹⁸ In brief, God calls to the priesthood only through the bishop. Analogously, in their understanding, a divine vocation to the religious state consists totally and solely in the act of a superior approving or admitting an aspirant to profession or a candidate to the novitiate.¹⁹ Moreover, the canonically required dispositions on the part of the candidate (fitness, right intention, etc.) can be considered as constituting a vocation only by abusing the word and committing a useless, confusion-engendering equivocation.²⁰ Strictly speak-

¹⁸ Cf. Rev. W. J. Ferree, S.M., *op. cit.*, p. 298; Rev. Aloysius F. Coogan, "The Priest and the Fostering of Vocations," *The Missionary Union of the Clergy Bulletin* (September, 1945), p. 59; Lahitton, *op. cit.*, pp. 19 f.

¹⁹ For a detailed account of the application of the decree of 1912 to religious vocation, consult Rev. Felix D. Duffy, C.S.C., *Testing the Spirit* (St. Louis, Mo., 1947), pp. 147-51. Although Lahitton himself was primarily concerned with sacerdotal vocation, he indicates clearly that he intends much of his work to be applied to religious vocation. Undoubtedly, it should not prove difficult to discover in this work some general principles applicable with equal rigor to the other states of life and most especially to religious profession (*op. cit.*, Preface). Again in his exposition of "The Theory of Reserved States," he maintains that the religious state is reserved by ecclesiastical law and hence requires a vocation from superiors constituted by ecclesiastical authority (*op. cit.*, pp. 253-355).

²⁰ Cf. Lahitton, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

ing, such dispositions are simply prerequisites making the aspirant "vocal" by a competent ecclesiastical authority.²¹ Most emphatically these subjective conditions must not be considered as effects of, and therefore signs of, an interior divine call prior to the invitation of a superior.²² As a matter of fact, it is only in extremely extraordinary cases that any interior divine vocation, any call directly from God, to any state of life occurs.²³ In the last analysis the admission of a candidate to profession by a superior constitutes religious vocation, and this is the only certain sign that one has been called by God to the religious life.²⁴

2. Arguments

a. *Negative.* Both positive and negative arguments are offered to establish this theory. On the negative side emphasis is laid on the subtlety and uselessness of an interior vocation. Thus, with St. Thomas, Lahitton admits of an interior vocation as one of the elements involved in the execution of predestination. But even here a subtle theological investigation is necessary, and it is hardly worth the effort to repeat this process for religious and sacerdotal calls, since an interior vocation is useless from a practical point of view.²⁵ Practicality, or rather lack of practicality, rules out a subtle investigation.

²¹ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 128, 147 ff.

²² Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 20, 123, 147, 155; Blowick, *op. cit.*, pp. 153 ff.

²³ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 249.

²⁴ Cf. *ibid.*

²⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 96.

It is argued also that an internal divine vocation is useless: (1) because it is nothing other than grace, and to call grace a vocation adds nothing real; ²⁶ (2) as the effect of predestination in the soul, such a call would impose an obligation to a definite state of life; but such an obligation would be destructive of the freedom of the counsels.²⁷

The force of the first argument, of course, depends upon the author's conception of the nature of the grace involved in a divine passive call. For Lahitton this grace "is a general principle which is found in every series of graces, by means of which God leads a creature to any sort of supernatural goal."²⁸ Consequently this grace cannot be a vocation formally sacerdotal or religious, i.e., one which bears upon these states as specific objects, but only materially so.²⁹ Hence even a speculative consideration of an internal call specifically sacerdotal (or religious) is useless; the only reality involved is *prevenient grace*.³⁰ Briefly, then, since grace for Lahitton is some sort of general force ³¹ which can be harnessed to

²⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 97. Now, what does this internal, passive vocation add to the realities in the subject, the realities which we have designated as necessary? Nothing, absolutely nothing. When we have said: supernatural election . . . supernatural intention . . . we have said everything. Accordingly, when the theologian, enamored of speculation, gives to this supernatural reality the name of divine passive call or vocation, this constitutes a theological elucidation which adds nothing real. In reality there is perfect coincidence, absolute identity between the passive call and grace.

²⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 97-101.

²⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 109.

²⁹ Cf. *ibid.*

³⁰ Cf. *ibid.*

³¹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 114.

serve any number of purposes and which lacks any definite quality making it more apt to produce a religious vocation than a pious ejaculation, logically enough he concludes that it is useless to speak of it in regard to any of the states of life.

The starting point of the second argument is the fact that an individual is free to choose any one of the various states of life, making his choice after a prudent judgment that takes into account his aptitudes and inclinations.³² Now this choice is free, and consequently no obligation is imposed to elect that state judged most suitable, since "No one is bound to choose the best." Lahitton presupposes that his minor premise is so well known that it needs no mention, an internal call as the effect of predestination would impose an obligation to a definite state of life. Hence, to maintain the existence of an internal vocation is to destroy the distinction between the precepts, which are obligatory, and the counsels, the essential norms of the various secondary states, which are free. One must conclude that it is impossible to say that in the matter of divine vocation the providence of God, as a general rule, imposes a determined state of life upon anyone.³³

b. *Positive.* On the positive side, in his attempt to establish his theory of the external call, Canon Lahitton has constructed a fourfold series of arguments drawing upon the teaching of the Church, Sacred Scripture, the Fathers and doctors of the Church, and theological

³² Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 247 ff.

³³ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 249.

principles. Since the former three are limited in their application solely to sacerdotal vocation, they need not be listed and analyzed here. Again, most of the theological arguments, especially those which proceed from the nature of the Church as a perfect, visible society, the necessity of a visible priesthood, and the blessing of peace in the soul of a priest, although framed in terms of priestly vocation, might well be advanced also in regard to vocation to the religious life. However, since Lahitton himself does not apply them explicitly, and since their force for him is only confirmatory and at best probably so, they will not be discussed in this work.

One argument, however, is concerned explicitly with vocation to the religious state. Here the religious life is viewed as being a reserved state crystallized into several orders and congregations of ecclesiastical origin. Since the Church is the source of the existence and the rights of these communities, it belongs to duly constituted superiors to determine who will be permitted to enter, to become a member of a particular religious institute. Thus, only the call extended to an individual by a competent superior constitutes a religious vocation strictly taken.²⁴

3. Criticism

a. *General.* Both misinterpretation of the Roman decree and a serious theological error are involved in the reasoning of those who discard every internal, passive vocation along with the mystical elements of the

²⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 253 f.

attraction theory in favor of a somewhat naturalistic external call. Father Wuenschel, C.S.S.R., after a brief indication of the true significance of the decision of the Holy See, puts the matter thus:

There we have the deathblow to the attraction theory—that and nothing else. To understand the decree as meaning that there need be *no* invitations of the Holy Spirit, is to read something into it that is not there. It is also an egregious theological blunder, for it is the same as saying that there is no need of divine grace to prepare a candidate worthily for the priesthood. The same blunder is implied in the idea that an interior divine vocation in any sense is excluded by the fact that only a right intention and fitness are required of the candidate—as if one could ever aspire to the priesthood with a right supernatural intention, and cultivate the virtues which form the ecclesiastical spirit, without special graces given by God for this precise purpose. It is these special graces that constitute the very essence of an interior divine vocation in the proper sense. Or if the necessity of grace be admitted, must we exclude an interior divine vocation at all costs by imagining that grace is some sort of general spiritual force which we direct whither we will—canalized, as it were, to do work of our independent choosing?

Not only does the above interpretation go far beyond the terms of the decree; it is also theologically untenable. It is a swing from one extreme (the attraction theory) to the opposite extreme—the denial of the reality and the necessity of an interior divine vocation in the sense always held in the Church.

Yes, that notion of vocation is contrary to the constant and universal tradition of the Church, from the earliest Fathers, rituals and legislation, both of the East and the West, to the latest declarations of the Holy See. This is affirmed on the basis of a long study of the available sources, the results of which have not yet been published.²⁶

²⁶ Edward A. Wuenschel, C.S.S.R., "The Traditional Notion of Vocation," *The Missionary Union of the Clergy Bulletin* (March, 1945), pp. 28 f.

b. *Particular.* Father Wuenschel's criticism of Canon Lahitton's external vocation theory has devoted special consideration to the argument which has been listed here as the first negative argument, namely, that an internal passive vocation is useless, because it is nothing else than grace and consequently adds nothing real to solve the question of divine vocation. As has been indicated, the force of the Canon's reasoning depends upon his conception of grace as some sort of general, spiritual force that can be directed into various channels by the person who receives it from God. As Father Wuenschel states, such a notion of grace constitutes an egregious theological blunder: a fact which will be assumed for the present and later on will be treated briefly, when the nature of the actual grace involved in vocation is considered, whether it be general or special. Hence this first negative argument may be dismissed summarily with the promise in passing that the determination of the essential nature of the grace of vocation will establish a fruitful source of practical, operative principles for the work of recruiting candidates and fostering religious vocations. Practical or not, however, matters little; for the truth of these principles will not be measured in terms of utility, as Canon Lahitton insists upon doing.

Anyone acquainted with the Thomistic teaching on predestination and free will should encounter little difficulty in handling Canon Lahitton's second negative argument, to the effect that the grace involved in an internal passive vocation is destructive of an individ-

ual's free choice, and would render obligatory, or a matter of precept, what should be free, a matter of a counsel. Since the same argument is used to deny also the possibility of a special internal call, and not simply any internal vocation, by the followers of the general, internal vocation theory, the consideration of this objection will be deferred until this latter theory has been analyzed sufficiently to warrant criticism.

Canon Lahitton's positive argument that the religious state, because it is reserved by ecclesiastical law, requires an external call by legitimate superiors, which call constitutes vocation strictly taken, contains both truth and error. From a juridical point of view an external, authoritative call by a superior's admittance of a candidate to the novitiate or the religious profession definitely constitutes a religious vocation. This much of the Canon's argument is certainly true. But he fails to consider that the juridical point of view does not bring into focus the whole of the religious state. For example, the essence of the religious state, the vows of perfection, because they are primarily internal human acts, are never directly subjected to any human legislator, whether civil or ecclesiastical. Furthermore, because the religious life involves human acts which are primarily internal and only secondarily external, and because the religious state is simply of divine origin and only relatively of ecclesiastical origin, Canon Lahitton's endorsement of an external call as vocation in the strict sense or simply ³⁶ can hardly pass unchallenged. As will

³⁶ Cf. Lahitton, *op. cit.*, pp. 20 ff., 123-25, 147.

be seen, theological thought previous to any of the theories set forth in these pages indicates definitely that primacy must be given to an internal, passive vocation.

C. *The general vocation theory.* Although Canon Lahitton must be acknowledged as the one who above all others started the theory of attraction on its way to condemnation, he was not at all the first to notice that this theory was not entirely in accord with the teachings of the Fathers, doctors, and early theologians of the Church. By 1880, several of the moralists had distinguished between a general and a special religious vocation, had listed the various theologians who proposed these theories, and had indicated their own preference for one or the other of these kinds of vocation. Representative of this trend is the tract of F. Piato Montensi, O.F.M., on vocation to the religious state.²⁷

1. *External, general vocation.*

a. Doctrine

In response to the question: In how many ways may vocation be distinguished? the learned Capuchin replied: In a twofold way, general and special. A general vocation he defined as an invitation made by Christ to all to follow Him in the perfect life, that is, by practicing the evangelical counsels. On the other hand, a special call is "an act of divine providence, by which God in a special way calls certain ones to the practice of the counsels. This vocation consists in a supernatural im-

²⁷ Cf. Piato Montensi, *op. cit.*, I, 32 ff.

pulse of grace, by which one is strongly and constantly moved to embrace the religious life." ³⁸

Both calls have this in common, that everyone favored by God in either way receives the graces necessary, indeed a superabundant gift of graces, to attain sanctity in the religious state. A distinguishing element consists in this, that the general vocation does not give grace to embrace the way of the counsels, but by prayers this power may be obtained from God; on the other hand, the special vocation is always accompanied by grace to enter into, and to persevere in, the religious state.

It is to be noted that for Piato this division into general and special is based primarily upon quantitative conceptions with "general" designating a universal call, that is, one extended to all Christians; whereas "special" indicates a particular vocation, one given to a definite individual. A qualitative distinction also is envisioned, inasmuch as the special vocation, an internal invitation of God, always involves an impulse of grace to enter the religious life. On the other hand, the general call is external to the recipient and does not entail the initial grace to enter religion, although grace is given to persevere in this life to one who prays for this gift. For Father Piato, this latter call is sufficient indication of the will of God that an individual's state of life is in religion. ³⁹

This general, external theory of vocation, then, may

³⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 32.

³⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 35. Piato ascribes this teaching to St. Thomas, *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 189, a. 10, and *Contra retrahentes*, c. 9.

be synthesized as follows. To some favored individuals are given special gifts of grace to enter the religious state. The fact that many others do not receive this kind of internal vocation should not restrain them from embracing the life, for the general invitation recorded in the pages of the New Testament, a call which does not confer any grace to enter a novitiate, suffices. One may act upon this external, general call with the assurance that the graces required to persevere in the religious life will be given to those who pray for them.⁴⁰

b. Criticism

As a general criticism of this theory of general vocation, it must be admitted that an invitation to follow Christ in the way of perfection by observing the counsels has been extended to all Christians. This is the clear testimony of Scripture, the teaching of the Fathers, and the explicit statement of St. Thomas. But there is another theological element in religious vocation considered by St. Thomas in the chapter of his *Contra retrahentes* cited by Piato, which the latter passes over in

⁴⁰ Piato proves his theory:

1. from the words of Christ instituting the religious state, all of which were general and excluded no one;

2. from the words of the Apostle (I Cor. 7:25 f.), exhorting all the faithful to observe the more arduous of the counsels; this he would not have done if only those could cultivate virginity who were favored by a special gift of God;

3. from the doctrine of the Fathers, who teach unanimously that all can effectively follow the evangelical counsels provided they place their trust in the help of grace.

4. from the ancient practice of the Church wherein parents offered infant sons to monasteries in which they were expected to remain as members, after they had become adults.

silence. A fundamental point is involved, and silence in this regard is not to be condoned. The Angelic Doctor will not sanction anyone's following this general, external call unless he has at the same time an internal vocation involving conviction of the mind and affection of the will.⁴¹ Simply enough, a supernatural act is involved in aspiring to the state of religious perfection, and consequently a supernatural principle is required, in this case an impetus of divine grace. Consequently the judgment on Father Piato's general, external vocation is that it is a vocation, but only dispositively so, and not in the proper meaning of the term, a point to be established in the scientific portion of this work.

2. *Internal, general vocation theory.*

a. Doctrine

The task of crystallizing the theory of general vocation and putting it in clear and comprehensive terms against the attraction theory was performed by the celebrated Arthur Vermeersch, S.J.⁴² Fundamental to this teaching is the admission of attraction, in the sense of an extraordinary illumination of the mind and incite-

⁴¹ Cf. *Against the Pestiferous Doctrine of Those Withdrawing Religious*, c. 9. For the sake of brevity we shall employ the common Latin title of this *opusculum* of St. Thomas, *Contra retrahentes*.

⁴² Father Vermeersch's treatise first appeared in a Paris edition of 1903, then in his *De religiosis institutis et personis* (Vol. II, 1909), *supplementa et monumenta*; and later in his *Commentary, De religiosis et missionariis*, Vols. VI, VII. It was republished as a separate booklet, *De vocatione religiosa et sacerdotali* (Beyacrt, Brugis); and is available in an English translation of the second edition of the latter book, *Religious and Ecclesiastical Vocation*, translated from the Latin by Joseph G. Kempf (St. Louis, 1925).

ment of the will, as a special vocation granted to a few. This kind of divine invitation is to be distinguished from the ordinary or general vocation which is offered to all as the result of free deliberation under the influence of grace.⁴³

As in the general, external vocation theory, "general" here also has the quantitative meaning of universal. But in this theory a qualitative sense is added, for a general vocation is some sort of ill-defined grace present in the soul of all in the state of grace which can be harnessed by the human will to perform the work of a religious vocation. What Canon Lahitton discarded as subtle and useless, this theory enshrines as the essence of religious vocation.

Within the framework of this theory, human freedom plays a most important role in the genesis of a religious vocation. To preserve free election in regards to a state of life, indeed the existence of any divine decree antecedent to man's use of free will is denied.⁴⁴ Denial is necessary, because the affirmation of an antecedent decree in the matter of religious vocation is simply to make obligatory and binding under sin Christ's invitation to follow Him, an invitation which enjoys the freedom of a counsel of perfection.⁴⁵ Therefore in a

⁴³ Cf. Vermeersch, *op. cit.*, pp. 49 ff.

⁴⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 8, 12, 43, also Rev. H. Davis, S.J., "Religious Vocation," *The Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, XII (1918), 219, 299 ff.; Blowick, *op. cit.*, pp. 46 ff., 87 ff., 137 ff., 155. These latter two authors have followed Father Vermeersch's doctrine closely and make explicit many of the principles fundamental to this theory of vocation.

⁴⁵ Cf. *ibid.* Because St. Alphonsus affirmed explicitly the existence of an antecedent decree in religious vocation and made this divine decree the starting point of his teaching on vocation, Father Ver-

question of religious vocation one must begin with the consequent will of God, that is, "dependent or consequent upon man's choice."⁴⁶

meersch and Father Davis have singled him out as the founder of the special-vocation theory, and have placed him and his followers (many of whom are listed by Lahutton as holders of the attraction theory) in competition to St. Thomas, the early theologians, and the Fathers of the Church, all of whom are interpreted as favoring a general vocation to religious life. Although it is not our concern to judge the degree of difference between St. Thomas and St. Alphonsus on this question, some consideration must be given to the charges of a divergent tradition beginning with St. Alphonsus which posits, contrary to the Fathers, the necessity of a special vocation. The principles evoked by these critics of St. Alphonsus maintain that an antecedent decree is completed in time by a special vocation; hence, to posit the first, is to affirm the second. Immediately evident to anyone acquainted with the Thomistic doctrine on predestination, is the fact that antecedent decrees are very much a part of St. Thomas' teaching. Hence St. Thomas should be regarded as being in agreement with the special vocation theory at least on the question of the basic principle, the existence of an antecedent decree. Better yet, St. Alphonsus should be listed as a follower of St. Thomas on this point as well as in the matter of the practical norms he faithfully ascribes to St. Thomas.

Secondly, attention must be focused on a crucial point of the criticism of St. Alphonsus' special-vocation theory. Special is an equivocal word, designating both quantitative and qualitative concepts. In the former sense, general or universal would be opposed to special, particular, or individual; but it would not be in opposition to special, bearing the qualitative sense of specific or determined in nature. Thus a universal call is given in the Gospels, an external call which acts dispositively to an internal call of a specified nature, namely, a special call to the religious life. This is the teaching of St. Thomas and, as the critics of St. Alphonsus admit, his too. Opposition between these two doctors is engendered by taking "general" in the qualitative sense of an internal grace lacking any definite characteristics that would specify it as a religious vocation previous to the recipient's free choice, and ascribing this teaching to St. Thomas. Had he taught this, he would certainly be opposed to St. Alphonsus.

In general, caution must be observed in using the terminology, general and special, and ascribing one or the other to the early theologians as their teaching, without determining accurately the sense in which these men would have used these terms.

⁴⁶ Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

The synthesis of this teaching on predestination, free will, and grace adds up to the following process involved in the genesis of a religious vocation. Man chooses first to follow the way of the evangelical counsels which are proposed to all. "This desire is clearly an effect of divine grace, and in the case of all who have the desire it is certainly a particular or definite grace. But we need not necessarily call it a special or extraordinary grace. Is it a grace superadded to the general grace which God offers to all men who are fit to embrace the life of the counsels? We may say that it is, without confusing the theory advanced in these pages, for we may consider it an additional grace offered to those who willingly listen to God's general call."⁴⁷ Somehow or other a general grace is channeled off by men, who can direct it where they will, into the groove of a religious vocation. Then some sort of grace which is particular or definite but not special or extraordinary—[an addition peculiar to Father Davis]—is added to the graces possessed by those who choose to follow the general vocation. This latter grace may be called a religious vocation, provided one keeps in mind that the choice has been made already under the impetus of a general grace.

b. Criticism

Such is the theory of general, internal vocation as proposed by this group of chief adherents. Strangely enough the arguments offered to bolster this teaching

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 232.

touch upon a single point, namely, that Christ's words and example as well as the texts of the apostles, most of which have already been cited, show that a divine call has been extended to all to follow the way of the counsels. As for the rest, a mere exposition of the general outlines of the theory is considered sufficient by these authors to guarantee its truth and acceptance. Indeed the theory will be accepted in its entirety by all those who embrace Suarez' doctrine on free will, predestination, and grace, for his teaching is the backbone of the general, internal vocation theory. In fact, his principles have not suffered any loss from being applied to religious vocation nor have they gained any advantage or additional determination thereby. The fate of his principles and his followers' conclusions are united inseparably. Suarezianism and the internal, general vocation theory fall together.

Obviously the perennial conflict of the various schools of theology on the subject of grace and predestination are involved in the question of religious vocation. Consequently, to avoid lashing dead horses and thereby unduly prolonging this consideration of religious vocation, the Thomistic position on these subjects has been assumed as true and will be set forth with no attempt at proof or criticism of opposing theories made explicitly in these pages, but solely with references to the more available sources where such matters are considered. In particular the citations will concentrate on material pertinent to freedom of a physically premoved will, which moves infallibly, of course, with-

out any of the obligations of precept being imposed. An internal, special vocation, as the effect of the working of God in the soul, by no means destroys the freedom of the counsels of perfection: such will be the conclusion suggested, or even affirmed, in the authors whose work will be referred to in developing this thesis.

D. *Special, internal vocation theory.* Finally, the theory to be developed in these pages, while admitting the possibility of attraction as the constitutive element of vocation in some rare instances, denies both the necessity and the ordinary occurrence of this phenomenon. Against the theory of external vocation, it maintains that this constitutes a swing from one extreme (the attraction theory) to another extreme: the denial of the reality and the necessity of an internal, divine vocation. Moreover, on the positive side, it admits with the proponents of the general-vocation theory that God calls all through the words of Sacred Scripture to follow the way of the counsels, at least the spirit of these norms of perfection. It admits, too, that this divine call is made through the ordinary channels of grace, through which one's thoughts and aspirations are directed to the religious life. Most emphatically, however, this theory of special internal vocation denies that this action of God depends upon the free choice of the individual and that the graces involved are the same graces given to all men, which happen to be rendered efficacious in a particular instance by the consent of man.

Lastly, by way of determining the nature of religious

vocation, an attempt is made to demonstrate that an intense act of devotion constitutes essentially a divine vocation to all the secondary states of life.⁴⁸ Recourse is had to the material factors of this virtue of religion to indicate the elements, both natural and supernatural, which contribute in their proper ways to constituting a divine vocation. As will be seen, it is these same material factors, present in all vocations but in different ways, that determine the suitability of a subject for a particular way of life. In all truth, on the part of the subject they are the determinants of the individual's particular vocation so far as they enter into the formation of the intention to follow a definite way of life. Special consideration is given to those elements which contribute in a special manner to the genesis of a religious vocation.

In this regard emphasis is laid upon the role of the virtue of magnanimity. The examination leads to the conclusion that the operation of this virtue is the most important factor among the various elements distinguishing religious vocation from other vocations to the secondary states of the Christian life. All factors contribute to a religious vocation, but magnanimity in a special manner qualifies as an indispensable element of religious vocation. Hence the theory of religious voca-

⁴⁸ Rev. Walter Farrell, O.P., in his article, "Virtues of the Household," *The Thomist*, IX (July, 1946), has proposed that religious vocation is an intense act of devotion: "The obvious conclusion of this study has been the identification of religious vocation, on its human side, with an intense act of devotion, the primary act of the virtue of religion" (p. 377). The present study, undertaken originally under the direction of Father Farrell, attempts to clarify, establish more firmly, and develop this theory of religious vocation.

tion advanced in these pages establishes this divine call as an intense act of devotion in a magnanimous mode.

In more technical terms, the theoretical consideration establishes divine vocation to the secondary states of life as a more intense act of devotion, that is, an act of devotion of greater intensity than the acts commonly called acts of devotion. Since the act of devotion is elicited by the virtue of religion, this virtue has been termed "radically" divine vocation, and its act of devotion has been called vocation "in act." Since both the virtue and the act pertain to the substance of religious vocation, both are termed vocation "essentially so." Finally, devotion is termed vocation "formally" to distinguish its contribution to vocation from that of the various factors which constitute the material elements of divine vocation.

Exposition completed of the theory of vocation, practical norms are established on the basis of the principles uncovered by this analysis. St. Thomas' specific practical norms are reported and incorporated into the framework of the theory, which, it is hoped, is nothing more than an explicit statement of what is contained implicitly in St. Thomas' various statements of principles concerned with religious vocations and in his descriptive definitions of this subject.

III. Words and Goals of Religious Vocation

I. NOMINAL DEFINITIONS AND SIGNIFICATIONS

A. *Nominal definition of vocation.*

1. Necessity

Whenever religious vocation is discussed, inevitably misunderstanding arises about the reality signified by this phrase. In regard to vocation itself, popular usage, on the one hand, has introduced an equivocation. Frequently the word is used to designate a state of life; for example, when a retreat master reminds a community of religious already professed and hence constituted in the religious state, that the members carry their vocations in a fragile vessel. Again, and with far greater frequency, the term is used to signify an inclination, attraction, or desire for a particular state of life previous to entrance into that state.

On the other hand, theological discussion of the subject has raised some searching questions and difficulties as to whether or not the word "vocation" has been used by the early theologians, and may be used correctly by modern ones, to designate an internal, passive divine

invitation to one of the secondary states of life; for example, to married life, or to the religious state. Consequently the first task to be undertaken on the scientific level is that of coming to terms on the nominal definition and the various concrete uses of the word "vocation."

2. Statement of Nominal Definition

In its most general sense, as it is applied to human affairs—and here there is little, if any, room left open for misunderstanding and argument—the word "vocation" expresses the action of summoning someone to move toward a definite goal. Bringing God on the scene to define a divine vocation demands simply the addition to the primitive sense of the Agent, who not only beckons but also moves, who both picks out the goal and directs the one called to that goal. Hence the meaning of the phrase "divine vocation" consists in the act by which God manifests His will to a person of directing him to a definite goal.

3. Explanation

First of all, it is to be noted that a vocation is not the goal itself; rather, the call must be distinguished from the goal in some way. Thus, in vocation to the primary state of the Christian life or to justification, the call, although substantially the same as justification, differs from it rationally so far as vocation is regarded as embracing in its scope the withdrawal of man from sin by the infusion of grace; whereas justification itself, taken

in its passive sense as a motion of the soul toward justice, is viewed from the term of the motion, the state of rectitude.¹ So considered, vocation is a preparation for the attainment of the goal. Likewise, in religious vocation there will be found an analogous relationship, in which the call itself, to be established in these pages as an act of the virtue of religion, is really distinct from, and a preparation for, the term of vocation, entrance into a novitiate or the pronouncing of vows, an act of devotion through which an individual embraces the religious state.

Secondly, to speak of vocation as the manifestation of the divine will does not identify the call with the acts by which God chooses or predestines a person. The words used by Christ to strike the keynote of His parable of the wedding guests, "For many are called, but few are chosen,"² have full application here. Vocation places one in the perspective of time midway between the eternal decree in the mind of God and its fulfillment in this world. The first effect of predestination in the subject,

¹ Cf. *IV Sent.*, d. 17, q. 1, a. 1 ad 2. Vocation is twofold. The first is external; for example, an invitation extended by a preacher. This kind is not justification, but is a disposition to it. The second is internal. Occasionally this vocation does not attain its end because of the defection of the one called. Vocation of this kind is an instinct or motion to God placed in the soul by God. It is not the same as justification, but is the path to it. Sometimes an internal vocation attains its goal; namely, when an individual listens to the one calling and comes to Christ. This kind of vocation is really the same as justification but differs from it rationally; for, whereas vocation signifies the infusion of the grace and the help of God whereby man is withdrawn from sin, justification signifies the final term of this process, namely, the state of rectitude. Cf. also *Summa*, Ia IIae, q. 113, a. 1 ad 3.

² Matt. 20:16.

that is, vocation, is the prelude to the realization of God's design.⁸ Hence, not being identified with the eternal decree, vocation may be discussed independently of predestination and divine providence; but because it presupposes this design of God, it cannot be understood properly except in the light of this doctrine.

This does not mean that volumes must be filled with introductory material on predestination and its various ramifications in the Christian life. Sufficient for the purposes of this study is the establishing of the general framework within which religious vocation may be viewed at its best. Fortunately enough, Thomistic terminology on the subject of vocation is developed completely and stamped with the marks of predestination. Consequently the mere presentation of the phrases used to designate the various kinds of vocations, coupled with the barest indication of the realities signified, will amply provide the necessary background, and at the same time advance this study along the road to a real, as distinct from a nominal, definition of religious vocation by distinguishing the various impositions of the word "vocation."

⁸ Cf. St. Thomas, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 8:30. A threefold action of God in justification is discernible. First, He predestined the faithful from all eternity; secondly, He calls them in time; thirdly, He sanctifies them. Cf. also *Summa*, Ia, q. 23, a. 2. Predestination is not something in the one predestined but solely in Him who predestines. For, as has been said, predestination is a special part of providence. . . . However, the execution of providence which is called government, passively is in the things governed, actively it resides in the governor. This execution of predestination involves vocation, magnification, and so on.

B. *Impositions of the word "vocation."*

1. General Division of Vocation

Since a divine vocation is concerned with direction to a definite goal, as the goals vary so will the calls. On this basis one may distinguish vocations to the Christian life (the primary state) and to the various secondary states of life including the religious state. Among these states is the obvious parallel ⁴ that all are made by God and that all lead, although by different ways which constitute proximate distinguishing ends, to the same ultimate goal, the perfection of charity. Equally evident is the fact that the calls to the secondary states of life presuppose the call to the Christian life itself, as the perfect presupposes the imperfect.

2. Particular Divisions

Accepting this generic proportion of imperfect to perfect, one can apply, analogically of course, the various divisions made of vocation to the Christian life to religious vocation.⁵ Thus theologians distinguish vocation into external, i.e., one which comes through the Gospels either by way of preaching or reading; and internal,

⁴ So close is this parallel between vocation to the Christian life and to the religious state that St. Thomas can argue that a man is no more to be dissuaded from following a religious vocation from fear of possible defection than one is to be prevented from embracing the faith because of the chance of a later apostasy. Cf. *Contra retrahentes*, c. 9; c. 10, ad 5.

⁵ This same process of application has been effected in regard to vocation to the mystical life by Rev. Garrigou Lagrange, O.P., *Christian Perfection and Contemplation*, pp. 337 ff.

which consists in the movement of the intellect and will of man under the impetus of grace.*

Although this division is commonly admitted to be valid when it is limited to grace and glory, the fact of its application to vocation to the secondary states of life by the early theologians has been earnestly contested. Thus, despite the fact that St. Thomas writes explicitly of both internal and external vocation in his opusculum, *Contra retrahentes*, one writer on the subject, strangely enough, has affirmed that the Angelic Doctor does not mention vocation at all, that he does not even make allusion to it.⁷ Sufficient refutation of this absurd assertion may be had simply by reading chapter nine of this opusculum. Likewise, when brought to the test of critical examination, the charge made by the proponents of the theory of external vocation that in theological Latin prior to the seventeenth century "vocation" in its passive sense, indicating something in the creature, was confined exclusively to the tract *On God*, specifically to

* *Comm. on Ep. to Rom., loc. cit.* St. Thomas comments as follows on the words of St. Paul: "Whom He has predestined, these also has He called." The first element in the fulfillment of predestination is the vocation of man, which is twofold. One is external, which is effected by the words of the preacher. . . . The other is internal, which is an instinct of the mind by which the heart of man is moved by God to assent to those things which belong to faith or virtue. . . . Cf. also *IV Sent.*, d. 17, q. 1, a. 1; *I Sent.*, d. 41-99, q. 1, a. 2 ad 3. This division is applied to religious vocation in *Contra retrahentes*, c. 9.

⁷ Twice. in *IIa IIae*, q. 189, a. 10, and in the opusculum *Contra retrahentes*, c. 9, the Angelic Doctor treats of the conditions required for entrance into religion. In neither place does he mention vocation; in fact he does not even allude to it. Hence he does not deem it necessary to do so. Cf. Branchereau, *Vocation sacerdotale*, p. 53.

the treatise on predestination to grace and glory, proves to be equally absurd.⁸

In fact, had these critics of internal vocation to the religious life and to the priesthood read carefully St. Thomas' commentary on Romans 8:30, the principal text in this important matter of vocation, they would have noticed that even here the meaning of the internal call extends to a movement of the mind and heart of man to assent not only to those things which are of faith but also to matters with which virtue is concerned.⁹ Simply enough, the Angelic Doctor has not limited the use of the word to signify the effect of predestination to grace; he refers it also to the effect of predestination to the acts of the virtues. Consequently the word "vocation" might well be used to designate the divine influence on every act of the Christian life.

Again, in his commentary on St. Matthew's account of the call of St. Peter and St. Andrew, St. Thomas, after pointing out that these two had been called "both interiorly and exteriorly," distinguishes a threefold vocation: (1) to follow Christ; (2) to be a disciple; (3) to adhere totally to Christ.¹⁰ Finally, there can be no gain-saying the fact of his application of the phrase "exterior and interior vocation" to denominate a divine call to the

⁸ Cf. Blowick, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-41; Lahitton, *op. cit.*, pp. 114 ff. For a discussion of predestination and vocation in the Thomistic sense and its application to religious vocation, cf. Rev. F. J. Burtaud, O.P., *La vocation au sacerdoce*.

⁹ Cf. *Comm. in Epist. ad Rom.*, *loc. cit.* (The text is given in note 6 of this chapter.)

¹⁰ Cf. *Comm. on the Gospel acc. to Matt.*, c. 4.

religious state. Far from being limited, then, to the tract on predestination to grace and glory, the word "vocation" has been used to designate an internal, passive call to various states of life and to diverse offices within these states.

Since it is entirely in accord with Thomistic principles to speak of an internal passive vocation to the secondary states of life, it will be permissible, then, to establish a nominal definition of this reality, a definition upon which we shall call many times in the process of establishing a real definition. Passive vocation, or vocation as it is expressed in man, will signify the motions of the intellect and will of man to the goal toward which God is drawing him through grace. All these acts of man are ordered to that act of will which actually tends to the goal, the act of intention. Consequently the word "vocation" on the part of man, as distinguished from its consideration on the part of God, signifies the intention of man to advance to a supernatural goal, specifically in the case of vocation to the secondary states of life, to the goal of a way of life in which God may be served. Thus St. Thomas speaks of vocation to the religious life as being expressed in man in his own act of intending to embrace the religious life: *propositum religionis*.¹¹

The external call can be further distinguished into: general, when it is addressed to all; and individual, or particular, when it is presented to a particular individual. Evidently this division is based on a quantitative

¹¹ Cf. *Contra retrahentes*, c. 10; c. 9, ad 4.

standard, and consequently either member of the division may be further denominated by the qualifying attribute, special. Thus a general call, which is addressed to all or to many, may lead to a special goal and therefore require a special type of divine movement; again, a particular call may also be very special, e.g., to enter a definite religious order.¹³

Without the internal call, the external call has no efficacy, except that of disposing one's mind by focusing the attention upon the words; for "our heart would not be turned to God, if God did not turn it to Himself."¹³ Thus the external call is truly a vocation, but only dispositively so; and internal call is vocation strictly taken, without which the external vocation, no matter what its source, remains inefficacious. St. Thomas is specific on this point in regard to religious vocation. Should entrance into religion be suggested by the devil or by a man, "such a suggestion has no efficacy, unless one is interiorly drawn by God."¹⁴

¹³ Considerable confusion has been generated by dividing general against particular and also against special, so that quantitative concepts are opposed to qualitative ones. In this way, as was indicated in note 45 of chapter 1, some modern theologians have pitted the teaching of St. Thomas against that of St. Alphonsus on the grounds that the former requires only a general call, whereas the latter demands a special vocation. Since neither doctor has employed this terminology, extreme caution needs to be taken in assigning these terms to their teaching. Throughout this study "general" will carry the quantitative notion of universal; and "special," except in cases where the statements of other theologians are being considered, will be limited to a qualitative meaning.

¹⁴ *Comm. on Gospel of St. John*, 6:44; *Comm. on Ep. to Rom.*, loc. cit.; *IV Sent.*, loc. cit.; *Contra retrahentes*, c. 9, for application to religious vocation.

¹⁵ Cf. *Contra retrahentes*, c. 10.

C. Conclusions. An examination of this brief outline of the various acceptations of the word vocation indicates that the principles of the Thomistic teaching on predestination and grace have been applied to the particular problem of vocation in working out the details within the framework of each kind of vocation. Applied to vocation in general, these principles may be stated summarily as follows:

1. Vocation is a preparation for, or disposition to, the attainment of a goal, and not the attainment itself. Proximately an internal vocation disposes by supplying the principles necessary to enable one to move to the goal, the means to attain the goal; remotely an external vocation disposes by bringing to one's knowledge the fact of the goal's existence, the possibility of its attainment, the invitation of God to strive for it, and so on.

2. Internal vocation, which alone can be efficacious, is the manifestation in time by the action of God on the intellect and will of man of the eternal decrees of God. In man, its expression is found chiefly in the act of intention in which man tends to a definite goal under the impetus of grace.

II. THE GOAL OF RELIGIOUS VOCATION

A means to attain an end, religious vocation, like every instrument, is measured by its function, that of leading an individual to embrace the religious life. Hence an examination of the religious life, the goal of the call, must be undertaken before consideration is given to religious vocation itself. Since the teaching of

St. Thomas on the nature of the religious life has become more or less common knowledge and is readily available to all interested, the analysis given in this study has been limited to those points alone which are indispensable to the understanding of the nature of religious vocation.

A. *The nature of the religious state.* In the words of our Lord addressed to the rich young man, "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast and give to the poor . . . and come follow Me,"¹⁵ may be found an epitome of Catholic doctrine on the nature of the religious state and its relation to the common Christian life. Two elements are contained in Christ's words: (1) the determination of what Christian perfection consists in, namely, the following of Christ by the affections of the soul through faith and more especially through charity; (2) the indication of a way to this perfection, that of self-abnegation by the voluntary embracing of the evangelical counsels. In this latter element lies the essential nature of the religious life.¹⁶

1. Distinction from Common Christian Life

Both the simple Christian life and the religious life travel along a common road to a common goal, that union with God which is accomplished by charity.¹⁷ It

¹⁵ Matt. 19:21.

¹⁶ Cf. *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 174, a. 3 ad 1.

¹⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, q. 184, a. 1, 3. IIIa, q. 46, a. 3; *III Cont. Gent.*, p. 135; *Contra retrahentes*, c. 6; *The Perfection of the Spiritual Life*, chap. 1; *Quaes. quod.*, III, a. 17.

is in charity, then, that Christian perfection essentially consists, a love that manifests itself in the observance of the precepts, both the principal ones immediately concerned with love of God and neighbor, and the secondary ones whose object it is to remove obstacles contrary to charity, namely, all mortal sins. In this way, by loving God to the extent of avoiding mortal sin, Christians apply to their love of God that simple measure established by Christ: "If you love Me, keep My Commandments." ¹⁸

Along the road to perfection, however, not only obstacles are encountered that destroy the virtue of charity, but also various impediments that retard a pilgrim on his journey of love without actually pushing him off the road. To rid themselves of these impediments, some followers of Christ put to work tools forged by Christ to hurl from the road everything that in any way might delay one of His loved ones. These tools are the counsels of perfection, instruments suggested and recommended, not ordered, by Christ, to be used by Christians who desire to love God to the extent of abandoning even the lawful pleasures and honors of this life in order to direct their lives to Him more fully and more readily. ¹⁹

2. Essence of the Religious State

Left to the free choice of all, the observance of the counsels is a commonplace in the Christian life. The

¹⁸ John 14:15.

¹⁹ Cf. *Summa*, Ia IIae, q. 58, a. 4; IIa IIae, q. 184, a. 3; *III Contra Gent.*, c. 130; *Contra retrahentes*, c. 6, 7.

laborer who contributes to making up a week's salary for a sick fellow worker, the clerk who puts aside a few minutes of his lunch hour to visit the church around the corner, the little old woman who drops a folded bill into the hat of the crippled street-beggar—all are practicing in these single acts the counsels of perfection. But the public embracing of the counsels as a way of life by vowing oneself to the observance of poverty, chastity, and obedience in a religious institute places one in the religious state, a state of perfection. This does not mean that all in monasteries and convents dazzle the heavenly choirs by the beauty of their perfect souls. It means simply that monks, friars, nuns, and the like, have dedicated themselves to the pursuit of perfection in a special way. Consequently, in the eyes of our mother the Church, who lovingly scrutinizes the external actions of her children, they are accepted as belonging to one of her spiritual states of life.²⁰

By profession of the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience religious bind themselves to the service of God in their loving quest for union with God. Indeed, the very essence of the religious state is found in these three vows completely delivering a soul bound by the bonds of love into the hands of God.²¹ Again, by profession the religious binds himself to the observance of an

²⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, IIa IIae, q. 184, a 4; *Quaest. quod.*, I, a. 14. For the nature of a state of life, cf. *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 183, a 1; *The Perfection of the Spiritual Life*, chaps. 17 f.; *Quaest. quod.*, III, a. 17.

²¹ Cf. *ibid.*, IIa IIae, q. 186, a 3, 4, 5; *Contra impugnantes*, c. 1; *The Perfection of the Spiritual Life*, chap. 11; Collegii Salmanticensis, *Cursus theologicus*, Tr. XX, disp. 1, dub. 1 (Vol. XII, pp. 326 ff.).

ecclesiastical approved rule and constitution proper to the religious institute whose superiors judge his qualifications and admit to profession of vows. Both elements, the internal dedication common to all religious and of necessity by divine institution, the external admission to vows by lawful superiors, a requisite condition by reason of ecclesiastical law, must be present and play their distinctive parts in constituting one in the religious state; and both are important factors to be considered in the determination of the nature of a religious vocation.²²

B. The religious state and the virtue of religion.

Throughout the analysis of the religious state the theme of perfection or charity has recurred over and over again; and rightly so, for religious life is a quest for an ever-deepening love of God. Why, then, is this state designated by a name that says nothing explicitly of love, and very much of service of God, the name of the normal virtue, religion?

1. The Nature of the Virtue of Religion

To answer the question by another question: since religion is concerned with the service of God and with sacrifices, who has a better claim to the title of religious

²² Cf. *ibid.*, IIa IIae, q 183, a 2; Salmant., *loc. cit.*, dub 11: The religious state can be considered in a twofold way. First, precisely in reference to the substance or essence of the state; secondly, in regard to the determination of the personal qualifications of those embracing the state, e.g., the age required for entrance. That the religious state considered in the second way (a way that is secondary since it presupposes the essence of the thing) falls under ecclesiastical law, may be shown easily from the practice of the Church in changing the required qualifications.

than one who sacrifices all that he has to the service of God? ²³ Stripped to bare essentials, religion is the moral virtue by which a man pays a debt to God, primarily the debt of worship as a protestation of faith that recognizes Him as the principle of all; secondarily, that of service by performing the works of mercy for the help of His subjects as a protestation of His dominion over all.²⁴ With this as a standard of judgment, it is not at all difficult to see why a state of life which requires of its members as a condition of admission the willingness to worship and serve God, and in its most perfect form demands the total sacrifice of self as a holocaust to God, should claim as its proper name, religious.

2. The Role of the Virtue of Religion in Religious Life

Indeed, the religious state not only claims the name justly, but also, by its very existence, proclaims that a whole way of life may be dedicated to the quest for perfection by exercising the virtue of religion. This virtue inclines a man to pay his debt to God by showing Him due reverence through worship and by protesting subjection to Him through service, both of which are accomplished by a single act.²⁵ Briefly, no one worships God without thereby subjecting himself; no one reveres God without serving Him. Since the subjection involved in an act of religion is always to a superior, God Himself, in every act the worshiper is perfecting himself

²³ Cf. *Contra retrahentes*, loc. cit.

²⁴ Cf. *ibid.*

²⁵ Cf. *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 81, a. 3 ad 1.

by placing himself in his proper place in relation to the source of all perfection. When the additional fact is considered that the domain of the virtue of religion extends to ruling all the acts of all the virtues, theological virtues not excepted,²⁶ we see readily that an entire life dedicated by vow to the exercise of this virtue becomes an all-important means for the attainment of the perfection of charity. Consequently, even though desire for perfection urges one to enter the religious state, this motive includes at least implicitly the desire to use the means available, the virtue of religion.²⁷ Quite naturally, then, the religious state is defined in terms of the virtue of religion.

Again, the relationship between the virtue of religion and the religious state is strikingly evident in the connection that exists between the principal and universal act of the virtue, devotion, and the act by which one embraces the religious life, the profession of vows. So close is the relation between these two acts that de-

²⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, a.4 ad 2 and 3; q.86. a.1 ad 1. For an analysis of religion's activity in commanding the acts of the virtues, see Rev. John W. Curran, O.P., "The Thomistic Concept of Devotion," *The Thomist*, II (1940), 559 ff.

²⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, a.5 ad 1. The faculty or the virtue which performs its operations about the end, by its command always moves a potency or virtue concerned with the means to that end. The theological virtues, faith, hope, and charity, exercise their act about God as their proper object; and consequently, by their command they cause the act of religion which effects certain things in order to God. Cf. also *ibid.*, q.82, a.2 ad 1, 2. In a similar way all worthy motives for entering religion include the virtue of religion as a means. Thus one prompted to seek admission to a religious institute out of sorrow for sin, implicitly also is motivated by the virtue of religion, and through the exercise of religious observances performs the desired penances.

votion is derived etymologically from *vovere*, to vow.²⁸ An act of the will offering itself promptly to the service of God, devotion, like the virtue from which it springs, wraps itself around the acts of all the virtues. In brief, it becomes the mode of other acts, directing them to the worship and service of God.

Although devotion may surge from the wellsprings of charity, driving a man to hand himself over to God, still it remains always the universal act of the virtue of religion, the mode of all acts concerned with divine cult. Simply enough, if one is not ready and willing to act with the promptitude that devotion furnishes, acts of religion are impossible. Hence, to take away devotion is to take away an integral element of a vow, the driving force of a will prompt to promise to God the things subject to itself, even itself.²⁹ On the positive side, devotion may be seen playing its most dramatic role in the pronouncing of religious vows, in actually outstripping itself by prompting a man to go beyond the demands of justice, of nature, even of the divine precept of love, in order to bind himself irrevocably to the service of God.

3. Conclusion

Intimate to all the acts of the religious state, then, the virtue of religion supplies the power that carries a candidate across the threshold of a new life. To put the matter in terms of means and ends, this virtue of religion and its principal act, devotion, are means to attain

²⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, q. 82, a. 1.

²⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, q. 88, a. 1 ad 2; a. 3.

the ultimate end of religious life, the perfection of charity. However, they assume the tremendous proportions of proximate goals, when the point of reference shifts from the ultimate to the initial, from the end to the beginning. On this level one is dealing with vocation proper, the call to religious life. Here it is a question of viewing a vocation in relation to its proper goal, the embracing of the religious life by the profession of vows. A brief view suffices, for now we need but to review what has already been determined in this chapter concerning the relation of vocation to the religious state and of the latter to the virtue of religion to arrive at the principal conclusion sought from this analysis: an act of the virtue of religion is the proximate, proper end of a religious vocation, the goal for which a divine call prepares a soul.

Specifically the profession of vows whereby an individual is constituted a religious in the strict sense of that term is the goal of religious vocation. In this act of profession the religious life is begun as divine vocation reaches its most perfect state in the attainment of its goal. Consequently, in virtue of the common principle that means must be proportioned to the ends, the field of investigation to establish the nature of religious vocation may be narrowed down to the virtue of religion and its universal and inseparable act of devotion. This anticipated conclusion, because it is based on a common principle, is not conclusive to certain truth; nevertheless it possesses a high degree of probability, since the principle obviously has applicability in this relation of

vocation to profession as means to end. The chief burden of the following chapter will be to establish this conclusion that religious vocation falls under the virtue of religion and its act of devotion on principles proper to devotion and religion. Moreover the conclusion now known in a confused way will be determined more accurately to show that religious vocation *qua* vocation is essentially an act of devotion. In other words, divine vocation to the secondary states in general is an act of devotion, an act whereby an individual intends to dedicate his life's work to the service of God according to the demands of a particular state of life. Furthermore, owing to the superiority of the states of life over the ordinary objects of devotion, a greater or more intense act of devotion will have to be established as the basic notion of divine vocation to the secondary states of life. Finally, because of the inherent greatness of the religious state, religious vocation will be shown to be most properly a most intense act of devotion.

C. *The religious state and the virtue of magnanimity.* The conclusions just stated above follow from a consideration of the object of religious vocation, the religious state. It is to the subject we must go to discover the principles and powers that account for the intensity of the acts of devotion which constitute the various vocations to the states of life. In the ultimate conclusion of this study, one virtue in particular is singled out as the special and proper cause of the intensity of the act of devotion which is religious vocation, the virtue of mag-

namity. Consequently a brief consideration must be given to the nature of this virtue and its role in the religious life, the goal of the religious vocation.

1. The Nature of the Virtue of Magnanimity

a. *Primary act.* As its name indicates, magnanimity denotes a state of soul in which attention and intention, the proper acts of the mind and the will, are concentrated upon great things.³⁰ Not simply to estimate, nor even to relish, the greatness of things; rather, to actively focus attention upon the accomplishment of great tasks and to keep the will prompt and eager to achieve great works, this is the work of magnanimity.³¹ Thus, as Aristotle and St. Thomas indicate, the magnanimous man is one who deems himself worthy of great things.³² Moreover, the great things the magnanimous man seeks to accomplish are not great solely because he himself is weak and puny; not at all. Their claim to greatness flows from their very nature; they are in themselves, apart from any comparison to the human faculty, great undertakings.³³ This then is the principal act of magnanimity, to tend toward heroic works, the big things the magnanimous man deems himself worthy of.

b. *Secondary act.* Because the tasks the magnanimous man seeks to accomplish are great and difficult

³⁰ Cf. *Ethics*, IV, 1. 8; *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 129, a. 1.

³¹ Cf. *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 128, a. un.

³² Cf. *Ethics*, loc. cit.

³³ Cf. *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 129, a. 1.

ones, in the eyes of men they are worthy of great honor. In short, the plaudits of the mob and the praise of other great men are the rewards of the magnanimous or "big-hearted" man. He does not despise the honors heaped upon him; he accepts them for what they are, the testimony of others to the excellence of the virtue he possesses. Nor does he let the acclaim of the mob drive him to seek honors for themselves. Honor accompanies the accomplishment of great tasks; it is a companion to the things he desires to accomplish most of all, great things. These are the important things. Honor, itself a great thing, is for the magnanimous man an inevitable, yet secondary, thing. To keep the passion for honor within the bounds of reason by moderating it lest it become a matter of primary import and by keeping it from dying out completely from lack of hope of accomplishing tasks worthy of honor, this is the secondary act of the virtue of magnanimity.³⁴

Two acts, then, are proper to the virtue of magnanimity. The first and principal act intended as an end is the accomplishment of great things; the secondary act is concerned with the fitting and proper use of the matter of magnanimity, great honors.³⁵ Inseparably connected, these two acts constitute magnanimity's contribution to the spiritual perfection of man. Full appreciation of the importance of this virtue comes with the elaboration of all that its acts imply in the life of man.

³⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, ad 3; Cajetan's commentary on this article; *II Sent.*, d. 42, q. 2, a. 4.

³⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, q. 131, a. 2 ad 1; q. 129, a. 8.

c. *Role in Christian life.* To tend to great things, to things that are difficult because of their greatness, is the principal act of magnanimity. As it is concerned with things that are absolutely great and not solely proportionately so, magnanimity does not establish a medium in its proper matter. With no limitations on the part of the object, this virtue seeks to accomplish its herculean tasks. In a word, the magnanimous man is continually reaching for the stars.³⁶ He does not however, like a child reaching for the moon, foolishly stretch out his arms for things beyond his reach. Magnanimity is a virtue; hence its acts are according to reason and observant of reason's medium. Specifically the magnanimous man seeks to attain only those goods he is capable and worthy of attaining.³⁷ Nor is he deceived by any appearances of greatness or false claims to greatness. Unerringly he seeks the things that are truly great and absolutely great, never those things that are falsely supposed to be great. Thus external goods, because they are transitory things and because their greatness is measured solely so far as they contribute to the perfection of soul, are never sought for themselves.³⁸ Even honor itself, the greatest of man's external goods and the matter of the virtue of magnanimity, is never established as the end of the truly great man's will; it is accepted as the consequence of being great, as a possible incentive to make him concentrate upon making himself truly wor-

³⁶ Cf. *Ethics loc. cit.*; *II Sent., loc. cit.*; *Summa, ibid.*, q. 129, a. 3 ad 1.

³⁷ Cf. *ibid.*

³⁸ Cf. *ibid.*; *II Sent., loc. cit.*

thy of honor.³⁹ Not the perfection that comes from acquiring external things but that which comes from the possession of internal goods, the perfection attained in the exercise of virtue, in fact the exercise of perfect virtue, this is what the magnanimous man seeks.⁴⁰ So intently does he apply himself to the pursuit of this perfection that he is characterized as a single-minded man seeking one thing, the best, more than anything else.⁴¹

Some notion of the fullness and the perfection of this primary act of magnanimity attributed to it by St. Thomas may be found in the distinction he draws between magnanimity and virility, the virtue which characterizes a perfect man. Andronicus Rhodii in drawing up his list of virtues that are annexed to fortitude distinguished magnanimity from virility. For him magnanimity is "a habit prone and zealous to accomplish deeds surpassing common events," whereas virility is "a habit sufficient of itself in matters pertaining to, and necessary for, common virtue."⁴² St. Thomas in admitting the validity of the distinction assigns to virility as its proper matter those things which must be performed by all by reason of the necessity of virtue and of precept; to magnanimity he gives the matter involved in acts of virtue above and beyond the common necessity of virtuous

³⁹ Cf. *ibid.*

⁴⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, l. 10.

⁴¹ Cf. *ibid.*, l. 8. Since the magnanimous man deems himself worthy of great things, as a consequence he considers himself worthy of the greatest things. Ultimately, magnanimity concentrates upon the one thing.

⁴² *III Sent.*, d. 33, q. 3, a. 3; q. 4, sol. 4.

action.⁴³ In fine, the fullness and completeness which virility or manliness bestows upon a man, is but the beginning of magnanimity. The magnanimous man is concerned with doing bigger and greater things than is commonly expected of man even at his best.

Without magnanimity's secondary act of moderating the passion for honor, however, it would be impossible for the magnanimous man to seek great things according to the demands of reason. An unrestrained desire for honor might well lead a man to seek great honors of which he is not worthy or to attempt great feats of which he is not truly capable. Thus are born the excesses of presumption, ambition, and vainglory. On the one hand, therefore, by placing a restraint and the mode of reason on the desire for honor, magnanimity keeps a man from making a fool of himself by presuming to do what is impossible for him.

On the other hand, by way of bolstering and strengthening the hope of accomplishing the difficult tasks he desires to perform, magnanimity keeps a man from burying his talents in the ground like the timorous, pusillanimous servant of the parable.⁴⁴ A victim either of his own laziness which keeps him from considering his God-given talents or of foolish fears that completely paralyze his mind and will and keep him from performing great and difficult things, the pusillanimous man, the man with a small mind and a small heart content with mediocre undertakings, refuses to do the things

⁴³ Cf. *ibid.*

⁴⁴ Cf. Matt. 25:14 ff.; Luke 19:12 ff.

he is capable of doing.⁴⁵ Because he fears failure, the small-minded man does nothing. Because he has lost confidence in his own abilities, he no longer has a basis for hope to accomplish great things. Indeed, so weak is his hope in his own powers and in the help he may expect from others, that he borders on the verge of despair. He definitely needs the help magnanimity affords through its integral parts, *fiducia* (confidence) and *securitas* (security).⁴⁶

Against despair confidence strengthens and invigorates hope to carry on confidently and boldly in its attempt to attain to its arduous good.⁴⁷ Not a virtue itself, but rather a mode or condition of magnanimity, confidence expresses itself in the appetites in the form of a more vigorous and more certain hope. Blind in itself, confidence uses the eyes of the mind to supply the motives for its certitude.⁴⁸ A firm, vehement opinion that the difficult good can be obtained either through one's own power or through the help supplied by others, is reason's solid support upon which this confidence leans.⁴⁹ Confidence, of course, seeks help from whatever source may supply it. No one who can help is overlooked. Hence it seeks confidently the help that God can give and is ready to give. Unlike the virtue of hope, which confidence strengthens, this confidence does not

⁴⁵ Cf. *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 133, a. 2 ad 3.

⁴⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, q. 129, a. 6 ad 3; a. 7 ad 2.

⁴⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, a. 6 ad 2, 3; q. 128, a. un., ad 6; III Sent., d. 33, q. 3, a. 3, qa. 2, sol., qa. 1 ad 2.

⁴⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, Ia IIae, q. 40, a. 2 ad 2.

⁴⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, IIa IIae, q. 129, a. 6 ad 1.

look primarily and solely to God; rather it looks to the magnanimous man's God given faculties, to his own powers as they are derived from God and are ordered to Him, to supply the power necessary for accomplishing its great feats.⁵⁰ When the power is present, the mind is assured, its confidence is added to hope's own infallible confidence, and both are reflected in a vigorous attempt to carry the task to a successful completion.

Against the fears that can turn a man into a sniveling coward and make him wring his hands pitifully and helplessly in the face of a dangerous undertaking, magnanimity pits its second integral part, security.⁵¹ Whereas confidence concentrates on the good to be attained and concerns itself with the obtainable resources of power to be tapped in its quest for the good, security is a bit pessimistic in its outlook. It looks to the evils to be avoided, the various ways in which failure may attend one's efforts.⁵² Confronted with these possible future evils, the pusillanimous man worries himself sick. Doubts and fears hound his mind and throw it into turmoil. Unable to concentrate on the task to be accomplished, the resources immediately at hand, the help to be expected and received from others, he is tempted to despair. Security halts this process from fear to anxiety to despair by concentrating its efforts on removing foolish, stupid fears and mental anguish. Some things must

⁵⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, q. 128, a. un., ad 2.

⁵¹ Cf. *ibid.*, ad 6; 1a IIae, q. 40, a. 8 ad 1; IIa IIae, q. 129, a. 7.

⁵² Cf. *ibid.*, 1a IIae, q. 40, a. 8 ad 1.

be feared, of course; security acknowledges the necessity of this virtuous fear. Other things should not be feared or at least not feared greatly. Security draws the line where it must be drawn, giving the mind the peace it needs to concentrate rightly on the task to be performed.⁵³ In this way security helps to make a man magnanimous and keep him so.

2. Magnanimity and the Other Virtues

By reason of its continual quest for great and honorable things, magnanimity prompts a man to perform the great and heroic acts of virtue that merit the praise of men.⁵⁴ Because it seeks always to push the other virtues to their maximum capacity, Aristotle and St. Thomas spoke of it as "the adornment of all the virtues" and as a factor "making all the virtues greater."⁵⁵ In a particular way, as has already been indicated, this "ornament" displays its crowning beauty and utility in establishing as the goal of the virtues in particular acts not only what is commanded by precept but also the far greater goods that are recommended by the counsels. Thus magnanimity attains to the status of a general virtue, not by commanding the virtues, for it is not itself so intimately concerned with the final end that it enjoys the prerogative of command, but because the proper matter of all the virtues can become the matter of mag-

⁵³ Cf. *ibid.*, IIa IIae, q. 129, a. 7 ad 1.

⁵⁴ Cf. *Ethics*, IV, l. 8; *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 129, a. 4 ad 4; q. 130, a. 2 ad 2.

⁵⁵ Cf. *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 129, a. 4 ad 3; *Ethics*, *loc. cit.*

nanimity whenever it presents the aspect of a great or difficult good.⁶⁶

Thus it serves as an integral part of fortitude, ensuring that the brave man on the one hand will not be a foolish lover of perils exposing himself to great dangers for many and trivial reasons and, on the other, that he will courageously face the greatest dangers for things that are truly great.⁶⁷ Again, in the matter of liberality, the magnanimous man is prompt to bestow benefits upon others, and to strive to return greater ones than he has received from others, seeking always to the extent possible to give rather than to receive; for the power to give is a mark of the perfect man.⁶⁸ These two examples are given by Aristotle to illustrate the influence of magnanimity upon the moral virtues. Fortitude is mentioned explicitly, justice implicitly in the example of liberality, a potential part of justice. No example is given of temperance; for, as St. Thomas indicates, temperance, since it is concerned with things common to men and the brutes, cannot be regarded as offering any truly great human perfection.⁶⁹ St. Thomas' judgment in this regard considers temperance in itself without any reference to what, humanly speaking, is an honorable end. But greatness by reason of an end extrinsic to the proper object of temperance may be attributed to acts of this virtue. Thus virginity, the virtue by which men abstain from all venereal delectation, by reason of

⁶⁶ Cf. *II Sent.*, d. 9, q. 1, a. 1, qa. 2, sol.

⁶⁷ Cf. *Ethics*, IV, l. 10; *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 128, a. un.; q. 129, a. 5 ad 2.

⁶⁸ Cf. *ibid.*

⁶⁹ Cf. *ibid.*

the end intended, the desire to attend more readily to divine things, is rendered praiseworthy, honorable, and great.⁶⁰ Indeed, the object of this virtue has a special excellence over that of chastity, the latter acting in accord with precept, the former attending to the better good of the counsels of perfection. So considered, chastity may be compared to virginity as liberality is compared to munificence.⁶¹ In the matter of chastity, therefore, virginity is perfect and most excellent. Consequently, to the examples of Aristotle, virginity, as a perfection of chastity and as a great thing demanding the exercise of magnanimity, may be added.

3. Magnanimity and the Religious Life

Because greatness and difficulty are intimately associated with the religious state and all the details of this way of life, magnanimity will be found wherever a vigorous religious life prevails. It is magnanimity that supplies to religious the fullness of heart and courage necessary to keep them plodding along the great and difficult road to perfection. Because this state of life aims at one special end, the worship or service of God as an expression of love and a means to greater love,⁶² magnanimity's single-minded concentration on the one big thing, the greatest thing of all, assumes the tremendous stature of an indispensable force or power inspiring, encouraging, and enabling religious to fulfill the

⁶⁰ Cf. *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 152, a. 2, 3.

⁶¹ Cf. *ibid.*, a. 3 ad 5.

⁶² Cf. *ibid.*, q. 186, a. 1.

central obligation of their way of life. Finally, it is necessary by precept that all men worship God; religious go beyond the limits of the precept and dedicate to God all that they are and all that they have. Not only what is owed to God, but what God deserves, that the religious attempts to pay, when he is truly a "big-hearted" servant of God. In brief, the religious state is generically a state of perfection; therefore magnanimity is necessary to keep the goal of growing continually in perfection uppermost in the religious' intention. It is specifically a state of perfection that concentrates on giving all that can be given to the service of God. There is need here, then, for a generous spirit that seeks to do not only what is commanded but also what is counseled.

Thus greatness and difficulty are stamped upon the essence of the religious life; and both are to be found also in all the details of that life. Now, the whole perfection of the religious life is crystallized in the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. It is here that magnanimity is seen at its best adorning the virtues corresponding to the vows and making them greater, in fact urging them to seek their most perfect expression. In all truth it may be said that magnanimity's urge to scale the heights leads these virtues to outstrip themselves.

In the matter of poverty all Christians are bound to practice the virtue of liberality, for all must moderate and keep within the bounds of reason their desire for external wealth and possessions. No one, however, is bound by precept to strip himself entirely of temporal

things. Religious, however, do just that as they bind themselves by vow to renounce the things of the world.⁶³ On the surface this may seem to be a most foolish thing to do since some external possessions are needed for human living. Actually, liberality under the guiding influence of magnanimity and prompted by charity has accomplished its greatest feat. It is not foolishness to follow Christ to perfection; nor is it foolish to fulfill the conditions laid down by Christ: "If thou wouldst be perfect, go, sell what thou hast and give to the poor and come, follow Me."⁶⁴ These are works of wisdom entirely in accord with reason. These are the things religious do.⁶⁵ Magnanimity has focused their attention upon the all-important goal, the pursuit of perfection. In the brilliant light of this goal, the luster of earthly things pales. Characteristically these magnanimous persons "contemn exterior things and appreciate only the interior goods of virtue."⁶⁶ Hence their act of liberality in renouncing worldly possessions is a generous one, one that stretches liberality's medium of reason to the breaking point, so much so that it borders on the spheres proper to the virtue of munificence.

Magnanimity's generous gesture is to be discerned also in the religious' dedication to a life of perfect, perpetual continence. Chastity's normal limit of abstaining from all illicit sexual pleasures is pushed to its utmost

⁶³ Cf. *ibid.*, a. 3; *Contra retrahentes*, c. 15.

⁶⁴ Matt. 19:21.

⁶⁵ Cf. *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 186, a. 2 ad 3.

⁶⁶ *Ethics*, IV, 1. 9.

bounds to include also those pleasures sanctified by the sacrament of matrimony.⁶⁷ As liberality under the guiding influence of magnanimity gives way to munificence, so too chastity surrenders the field to the greater virtue of virginity.⁶⁸ In short, magnanimity's urge for the great and the difficult puts such a strain on weak human nature that the ordinary virtues will not suffice to make the acts it pleads for natural, easy, and delightful for man. Only great virtue can meet its demands.

By the vow of poverty religious offer to God a holy and pleasing sacrifice of the things of this world; by the vow of chastity they dedicate to Him and to His sole service their bodies, in effect they adore Him by offering Him the service of their bodies. One thing remains to make their sacrifice a complete and total holocaust, their own wills.⁶⁹ This their most precious gift they have to offer is surrendered by the vow of obedience.⁷⁰ The gift itself is great, and that alone is sufficient to show the need of magnanimity's prompt willingness to be generous in giving to others. The effect of the vow, too, extends beyond the limits of precept into the proper range of the counsels. Not only is the religious bound to obey God and his superiors in the matters determined by divine positive and natural law; he is also bound to obey legitimate superiors, and this under the pain of sin, in all that pertains to religious observance.⁷¹ Since

⁶⁷ Cf. *Summa*, *loc. cit.*, a. 5.

⁶⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, q. 158, a. 4.

⁶⁹ Cf. *Contra impugnantes*, c. 1; *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 186, a. 1.

⁷⁰ Cf. *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 104, a. 3; q. 186, a. 5 ad 5; a. 8.

⁷¹ Cf. *ibid.*, a. 6.

all that he is and all that he has is dedicated to the service of God, religious observance which falls under the vowed obedience can touch the disposition of his whole life.⁷² Here there is evident something of the fierce totality of magnanimity's willingness to subordinate all things to the one great and all-important thing.

Since magnanimity offers the incentive to strive for the greatest expression of the three virtues corresponding to the vows of religious life, every phase of this life feels something of its influence; for all religious observances are centered in these vows. In particular, the rule, constitutions, and customs proper to the various religious institutes are ordered to the observance of the essential vows.⁷³ At times the ordination is a direct one when the observance of vows in particular cases is ordered. At other times the order is indirect so far as particular ordinations and observances remove from the life of a religious impediments to the full and proper observance of the vows.⁷⁴ Consequently even the ceaseless round of small things in a life crowded with big things must feel the influence of magnanimity's determination to scale the heights.

4. Conclusion

Because greatness and difficulty are inseparably united to the religious life, this state of life offers a challenge for magnanimous men and women. An unim-

⁷² Cf. *ibid.*, q. 186, a. 6 ad 4; ad 1.

⁷³ Cf. *ibid.*, a. 7 ad 2.

⁷⁴ Cf. *Contra impugnantes*, c. 1; *Summa*, *loc. cit.*, ad 7.

ped exercise of this virtue is a necessary condition for a full, vigorous religious life that is striving to attain the perfection of charity. This is the general conclusion warranted by this consideration of the role of magnanimity in the religious life. In the course of the argumentation special emphasis has been placed upon magnanimity's role in the vows that establish the integrity of the religious life. For it is in the profession of vows that religious vocation attains its full and perfect stature, while the religious life itself is just being born. The vows are the beginning of the religious life; they are also the end of religious vocation. Because of these vows and their inherent greatness, magnanimity is required for the religious life. Because of them, too, it seems that magnanimity must also constitute an element of religious vocation; for the means, vocation, must be proportioned to the end, the religious state. This conclusion, now known on the basis of a common principle, will be demonstrated in the chapters to follow on the basis of a proper and immediate principle.

IV. The Nature of Religious Vocation: Formal Consideration

It is principally in one of his polemical works, *Against the pestiferous doctrine of those withdrawing men from religion*, where St. Thomas is preoccupied with defending the practices of his beloved Church, that the foundations of his teaching on religious vocation are laid.¹ Here the full force of his devastating logic is concentrated on the arguments of those contemporaries who were attempting to deprive the Church of new recruits to the religious life by demanding that candidates first be proved in the observance of the commandments before attempting to keep the evangelical counsels, and by imposing upon them the obligation of long and tedious deliberation and of repeated consultations with many spiritual directors before entering a religious institute.² The broad and general outlines of his teaching are

¹ A summary treatment of the same doctrine will be found in the ten articles of the question on *entrance into religion* in *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 189.

² Cf. *Contra retrahentes*, c. 1.

sketched in his consideration of the necessity of taking counsel before entrance into a novitiate.

I. EXPLICIT IN ST. THOMAS

A. *Distinction of calls.*

1. External

a. *Personal.* St. Thomas reminds his opponents of the suddenness of Christ's call to Peter and Andrew, to James and John, and to Matthew, all of whom immediately abandoned their very means of livelihood (Peter and his companions, their nets and boats; Matthew, his taxgatherer's booth) to follow Christ.³ Sacred Scripture is combed to produce telling evidence based upon similar situations of prompt obedience to God's call, and the Fathers of the Church are called upon to bear witness. For St. Thomas, the words of Christ calling men to follow Him and His way of life constitute a religious vocation, an external call to a life of perfection.⁴

b. *General.* Because his opponents admitted the cogency of his argument when the call came directly from the lips of Christ, but attempted to escape his conclusion by insisting that, after the ascension of Christ, the divine invitation came to men interiorly only, and consequently required testing to prove its divine origin, St. Thomas immediately extends the meaning of an external call to include also the words of Scripture as

³ Cf. *ibid.*, c. 9.

⁴ The terminology of internal and external call is that of St. Thomas himself. Cf. *ibid.*

men read them today; for "we must accept the words of Christ which are related in the Scriptures, as if we were hearing them from the mouth of the Lord Himself." ⁵

2. Internal

As the terminology suggests, this external call is distinguished from an internal vocation, in which God speaks inwardly to man. This latter call is described variously as an internal locution by which the Holy Spirit moves the mind, and, depending on the text of Scripture or the writings of the Fathers cited by St. Thomas, as an internal inspiration, an impetus of grace, a revelation of the Holy Spirit suggesting what men must do, an instinct of the Holy Spirit by which men are moved to enter religion, an internal inspiration, and an illumination of reason. ⁶ As is evident from the phrases themselves and from the context, religious vocation is taken here in its active sense of a divine movement in the souls of men. This is vocation viewed from God's side. What is to be said of it on man's side? It is common theological teaching that God operates in each thing according to its nature; since man is a rational creature, we may well expect God to respect His creature's nature

⁵ *Ibid.* The principle here enunciated and repeated in this form: The words of Sacred Scripture are spoken not only to those present at the time, but also to those who are to come later, is a paraphrase of Mark 13 37: What I say to you, I say to all. This text and Heb. 12:5 are quoted by St. Thomas to establish his principle, and the authority of St. John Chrysostom is adduced: If these things had been said only for their [disciples'] sake, they would not have been written down; certainly they were said for them, but they were written for us.

⁶ Cf. *ibid.*

in the divine movement which constitutes religious vocation. On man's side, therefore, we should expect some action proper to man, a human act involving reason and the exercise of free will. This is exactly what St. Thomas singles out as the expression of religious vocation in man, an act of intention. In every instance when he speaks of man's correspondence to God's movement in religious vocation, he employs the phrase "*propositum religionis (assumendae)*." [†] For him the reality signified by this phrase, *the intention to embrace the religious life*, formed by man under the impetus of the Holy Spirit, constitutes religious vocation on the part of man. Hence, for a nominal definition of internal, passive vocation,—religious vocation on the part of man—we may employ St. Thomas' phrase: "*propositum religionis assumendae*," the intention to embrace the religious life.

B. Relationship between internal and external vocations. Now it is evident that for St. Thomas the internal and external call differ radically. The latter, initially presented personally by Christ to His hearers, continues to re-echo in the world today wherever the Gospels are preached or read. On the other hand, the internal call involves the activity of the Holy Ghost through grace upon the intellect and will of man. Consequently the internal call cannot be reduced to any purely natural consciousness of the fact that Christ has invited all to follow Him. Clearly this internal vocation

[†] Cf. *ibid.* c. 9, 10; *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 189, a. 10 ad 1.

must be regarded as adding some definite, divine influence upon the faculties of man. Presupposing this truth as obvious,—indeed, were the case otherwise, his argument would be unintelligible—the Angelic Doctor writes: “If therefore, as it is said, the voice of Christ uttered externally demands immediate obedience, far more then ought no one resist the interior locution, by which the Holy Spirit moves the mind.”⁸

1. Difference as to Efficacy

The difference stands out in bold relief, when the question of the efficacy of these two kinds of vocation is considered. Of itself, the external call has no efficacy except that of grasping the attention of the mind; it is powerless to bring a man to follow Christ. The barriers of the human mind and will can be cleared only by an internal, divine vocation. Hence no one will truly follow an external call if he is not equipped with the necessary interior dispositions of mind and will effected in him by the grace of God.⁹

2. Difference as to Extension

Another difference to be noted is concerned with the extension of these two calls. An external vocation may be addressed to a particular individual or to all the faithful; whereas the internal call lacks the note of universality and must always be particular.

Now it is evident enough that the external vocation of the apostles was a particular invitation to follow

⁸ *Ibid.*, c. 9.

⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, c. 10 ad 4.

Christ, for it was addressed in individual cases to a handful of men. Likewise Christ's words to the multitudes, "If any man will follow Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me,"¹⁰ contain an invitation directed to all men to follow Him to perfection along the royal road of the counsels. Thus the Gospels present instances of particular and universal external vocations to what now constitutes the religious life. But it is to be noted that particular calls to perfection addressed by Christ personally to definite individuals have acquired, through their recording in the Gospels, a note of universality. St. Thomas' proof of this fact is simply an application of the principle already established that the words of the Gospel were spoken for men of all ages:

Let us see whether the counsel given to the youth by our Lord: *If thou wilt be perfect, go, and sell what thou hast and give to the poor* (Matt. 19:21), was directed to him alone or also to all men. We can settle this question on the basis of the incidents which follow in the Gospel. For, when Peter said to Him: *Behold, we have left all things and have followed Thee*, our Lord fixed a reward for all, saying: *Everyone that hath left home or brethren . . . for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold and shall possess life everlasting*. Hence this counsel ought to be accepted by each individual no less than if it were offered to each individually from the mouth of our Lord Himself. Likewise, although He addressed the words to the young man as to a single individual, elsewhere He offered the same counsel universally, saying: *If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself* (Matt. 16:24). Consequently the counsel given by the Lord to the youth is to be accepted as if proposed to all by the mouth of the Lord.¹¹

¹⁰ Mark 8:34.

¹¹ *Contra retrahentes*, c. 9.

Equally certain is the fact that an internal call cannot be universal or general, but must be particular or individual; for it is a definite influence of the Holy Ghost upon the intellect and will of a particular individual. It might be called special also, signifying by this a quantitative notion of restriction or reservation to particular individuals. As yet nothing has been said to indicate that this internal vocation may be called special in the qualitative sense of a grace having a nature distinct from those graces common to the Christian life.

C. Summary. By way of partial summary of the explicit teaching of St. Thomas on the nature and extension of religious vocation, the following propositions are offered.

1. An external, divine vocation to follow Christ in the way of the counsels of perfection, i.e., a vocation to religious life, is offered to all the faithful through the words of Sacred Scripture.¹²

2. This call, however, is inefficacious without a particular, internal vocation effecting in the recipients the dispositions of mind and will that lead them to intend to embrace the religious life. This intention is religious vocation as expressed in man.

In terms of the will of God, the first proposition indi-

¹² Despite the fact that the invitation of Christ might be interpreted as simply a vocation to observe the several counsels, St. Thomas does not hesitate to interpret the words of Christ as a vocation to religious life. For, it is here, in the religious life, that the practice of the evangelical counsels becomes the very substance of the life. On this point, see Rev. F. M. Maggiolo, O.P., "La vocazione religiosa secondo S. Tomaso," *Xenia Thomastica* (Rome, 1925), II, 281.

cates that by His antecedent will God wills all Christians to establish themselves in the state of perfection; the second, that He wills by His consequent will that certain ones, and not others, actually do become religious. By analogy with the division of grace into sufficient and efficacious, the external vocation can be denominated a sufficient call; the internal, an efficacious call which infallibly moves a man to choose freely the religious state.

D. Critique of general and external vocation theories.

1. General Vocation Theory

So stated in terms of God's willing all men to follow the way of the counsels in religious life, the general call to the religious state seems to have troubled some men at the time of St. Augustine; but it troubled him little, or not at all. To the objection that, should all men begin to practice the counsel of chastity, the human race would perish, St. Augustine offered the surprising answer that this would ensure a more speedy completion of the city of God.¹³ Not only he, but also the early Fathers of the Church, taught emphatically that this call to religious life is universal or general. Indeed, whole discourses were written by some of the Fathers in which they urge Christians to follow the religious life. In general, it may be stated that the Fathers of the Church are unanimous in teaching, as did St. Thomas, that the religious life is offered to all Christians by divine invitation.¹⁴ The pro-

¹³ Cf. St. Augustine, *De bono conjug.* (Migne, *PL*, *XL*, 381.)

¹⁴ Among the complete treatises are St. John Chrysostom's *On vir-*

ponents of the general-vocation theory are on safe ground, then, in listing these authorities as favoring a universal vocation.

But their authority can be claimed only in regard to the existence and not to the efficacy of this general, external call, which in the last analysis, as has already been indicated, serves only as a disposition, a preparation of the mind to a favorable consideration of the religious state as a possible state of life for this or that individual. To be effective, this universal, external call desperately needs the active help of the particular, internal call. Failure to consider this latter element of St. Thomas' teaching accounts to a great extent for the ease and finality with which his doctrine has been opposed to that of St. Alphonsus, who, recognizing the existence of both vocations, rightly emphasized the necessity of the internal.

2. External Vocation Theory*

The applicability of this principle of comparative efficacy is not limited to the external vocation that arises from the reading of or preaching of the divine invitations recorded in the Gospels. In its universality the principle also establishes the relationship existing between the external call, arising from the acceptance of a candidate and his admission to profession by legitimate superiors, and the internal vocation. An external call of this sort may well be the occasion of an actual grace,

ginity; St. Ambrose's Concerning virginity, On virginity, On the exhortation to virginity; St. Augustine's On the conjugal state, On holy virginity.

which, when efficacious, perfects the internal vocation through its influence upon the firmness of intention. Again, through the actual grace given at this time, this external call enters into the internal call and completes or perfects it essentially by determining it to this particular religious institute. To affirm more than this, would be to go contrary to the general theological teaching on the possibility of one man's influencing another to follow a definite course of action. To deny it, is to deprive this vocation of any significance in the working out of the divine plan of government of the world whereby inferiors are perfected and directed by the actions of superiors. Considered thus as lining up on the active side with God in the granting of vocation, the canonical call is viewed in its true dignity, a mode of manifestation in time of the eternal decree of God.

Considered from the juridical point of view, however, as a determination of ecclesiastical law (which like all human law focuses its attention upon external observances), this call by legitimate superiors may be interpreted in a twofold manner.

1. It may be considered a stamp of approval on the suitability of the candidate as indicated by his external acts and condition. These standards of judgment, the only ones ordinarily available to men, are truly signs of an internal vocation constituted materially, a point to be developed in the next chapter, by those elements singled out in the law as determinants of suitability, and repeatedly urged by the supporters of the external vocation theory as the only elements required of a candidate,

Since the internal call demanded by St. Thomas and the realities involved in it must be supernatural, and therefore hidden from the eyes of men, men can look only for signs of fitness and right intention. These elements are signs, because they are effects first of the grace of vocation.

2. It may be regarded as a juridical act conferring a privilege on the candidate to enter into, or to make profession in, a religious institute. In this sense, as admitted by all, vocation by legitimate superiors is the only one required, indeed the only one possible, since the Church alone lays down the rules to govern her own institutes in which the divinely founded religious life is led.

II. IMPLICIT IN ST. THOMAS

But, it may be asked, why is this internal call necessary? What is it? Quite naturally these questions arise from a perusal of St. Thomas' explicit teaching on religious vocation; and it is with the answers to these questions that the remaining portion of this analysis of the nature of the call will be concerned.

A. *The necessity of internal vocation.* In regard to the first question, St. Thomas did supply an answer, but it is one that was limited by the requirements of his primary purpose at the time of writing. At the moment he was engaged in a debate with Christians who had fallen into error regarding a practice of the Church. Hence his polemic was directed to those who admitted the divine authority of the Scriptures and accepted the teaching of

the Fathers as a witness to the traditions of the Church. Logically, then, his arguments are drawn from these authoritative sources rather than cast in the form of strict theological proofs. He had no need of proving the necessity of a supernatural, interior vocation; he merely had to remind his opponents of the general fact that God moves men through the impetus of grace, and then apply this truth to the question of vocation. In fact, some of his opponents had attempted to avoid the force of his argumentation to establish the necessity of prompt obedience to a divine call, by admitting the truth of this in regard to external calls but denying it when an internal call was involved. For them, it was clear that the contemporaries of Christ who heard His voice should have responded without delay; equally certain was the fact that, since Christ's human voice was stilled and only an internal call, which might come from sources other than God, was available, deliberation and counsel were necessary to prove the spirit.¹⁵ Certainly the very arguments of his opponents and his own mode of procedure give eloquent testimony to the mind of St. Thomas and his contemporaries on the question of the need of an internal vocation to the religious life.

A rational argument, if one is needed, may be stated briefly and simply. A religious vocation is a movement of the mind and will of a man to a supernatural object, the state of perfection attainable through practice of the evangelical counsels. Hence, since the order of agents

¹⁵ Cf. *Contra retrahentes*, c. 9.

must correspond to the order of effects, this movement must be internal and supernatural; briefly, the effect of grace. From the necessity of this movement to the fact of its existence is but a step over familiar ground taken by St. Thomas on many occasions. Grace perfects nature; therefore grace is not deficient in those things in its own order through which man is perfected in the natural order by the principles of his nature.¹⁸ But in the natural order man's mind and will are moved by God to their objects; therefore also in the supernatural order.

B. The specific nature of the internal vocation.

Generically, then, a divine vocation is something supernatural. What is it specifically? As we have indicated, St. Thomas variously describes it as a revelation, an inclination, a divine instinct or influence on the intellect and will of man, an impetus of grace, and so on, the descriptions depending for the most part upon the texts of Scripture or the words of the Fathers quoted by him in the course of his argumentation. In each instance, however, the phrases employed contain the basic notion of an action of God upon the rational faculties of the human soul, an action that produces a special effect in moving these faculties to know, to desire, and to will to embrace the religious state. Placed against the background of the Thomistic teaching on the mode of God's

¹⁸ Cf. *Summa*, 1a, q. 22, a. 2 ad 4; q. 83, a. 1 ad 3; q. 106, a. 3, 4, 5; 1a IIae, q. 65, a. 3.

action in the human soul when there is question of movement to a supernatural object, this generic note indicates that the element involved is a grace of God.

1. What It Is Not

a. *Not a charismatic gift or habitual grace.* Moreover, since the primary end of religious vocation is the personal sanctification of the person called, and not his cooperation in the sanctification of others (at least, not the primary end), it is necessary to exclude the possibility of a charism qualifying as the essential element of religious vocation.¹⁷ Again, since operations of the faculties are involved, habitual grace will not fit the requirements; for this grace is rooted in the soul and not in the faculties as a proximate principle of action.¹⁸ By way of exclusion, therefore, only an actual grace or an infused virtue emerges as a possibility.

b. *Not necessarily an extraordinary actual grace.* Of the two, an actual grace seems, at first glance, to be more in accord with the various descriptive phrases employed by St. Thomas. Such a grace would have to be very similar to those of prophecy or biblical inspiration, both of which involve a divine illumination of the intellect to judge and a movement of the will: in the case of prophecy to speak; in inspiration, to write. Requiring a special revelation to the mind of the candidate by which God makes known to him His will, this grace

¹⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, Ia IIae, q. 91, a. 1.

¹⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, a. 3, 4.

would be a most extraordinary grace. Certainly it would be rash to discredit entirely, or to deride the possibility of, the manifestation of God's will in this manner; for to eliminate it would amount to placing a limit on divine action. At the same time, however, it would be equally rash to view this way as the sole way or even the ordinary way in which God calls His future religious.¹⁹ One may conjecture how many religious would be in their convents and monasteries today if vocation to the religious state consisted in an extraordinary revelation and divine attraction of this sort.

c. Not an ordinary actual grace. Since St. Thomas' terminology and the realities of the problem need not be considered as requiring a very special, extraordinary grace, consideration must be given to the possibilities of an ordinary actual grace's qualifying as the essential element of a religious vocation. Recently an author in considering the theology of religious vocation advanced such a solution to the problem. With acumen he avoided the thickets and blind alleys of the solely external and of the general or universal theories. Thus, having broken his way into the clear, he focused his attention on the nature of a religious vocation. The question that he places at the beginning of his treatment is itself indic-

¹⁹ The report of the Apostolic Commission (*A.A.S.*, IV, 485) in which Canon Lahitton's work was commended so far as it contained three propositions is applicable here to religious life, especially the second proposition: That requisite on the part of the candidate for orders, which is called priestly vocation, does not by any means consist (at least necessarily and ordinarily) in a certain interior attraction of the subject. . . .

ative of the fact that he has grasped the real elements of the problem: "Now just what is the nature of the grace of invitation to the religious life which God grants to some souls and not to others?"²⁰

In phrasing the question, the author issued a challenge; in answering, however, he refused, pleasantly enough, to accept the challenge.

The authors will disagree in the answers, which as G. K. Chesterton once remarked, is the business of doctors to do. The grace is, perhaps, better described than defined, and this fact does not make it any less a reality. There are some realities in life that are not found by definition in text books. If, for example, the reader were to make a survey by questioning the first fifty religious men or women he met as to the nature of the grace of inclination God gave them to the religious life originally, he could not give a definition which would fit every case, perhaps not even two cases. He would be astounded, if he had wonder in his soul, at the marvels of the workings of God's grace in the single field of vocations to the religious life. . . . For a vocation to the religious life is a mystery of God's love, a mystery of predilection, and it is not a little presumptuous to say that it is anything else.²¹

Father Duffy finally settles for the following description.

The grace of a vocation to the religious life is that divine invitatory motion manifesting God's will of good pleasure to a man or woman by the light of reason enlightened by the grace of faith, and moving the will to embrace the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience in imitation of Jesus Christ.²²

²⁰ Rev. Felix D. Duffy, C.S.C., *Testing the Spirit*, p. 154.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 154 f.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 155.

The author apparently is content to place the invitation to the religious life in the class of actual graces. Unless he is willing to postulate an exceptional type of actual grace, which unlike its counterparts is not transient but permanent, he will encounter insuperable difficulties in any attempt to consolidate with his descriptive definition of religious vocation his insistence upon "the acceptance of the subject by a competent superior being the completion, as it were, of his vocation."²³ To be completed, the grace of vocation must be present for more than a fleeting moment; and permanence is an attribute not of a motion, an actual grace, but of a habit, a virtue.

Although this argument, drawn from the permanence of vocation, couched in these terms and placed in the context of the refutation mentioned, has the appearance of being solely *ad hominem*, nevertheless it has the force of a probative argument. The ultimate end of the call, the role it is called upon to play in the divine economy, is, as the author rightly states, that of "moving the will to embrace the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience in imitation of Christ." In other words, the divine vocation is truly complete and efficacious when the candidate makes profession of vows in a religious institute. Previous to profession, however, are the canonical novitiate and postulancy consuming more than a year's time. Again, another interval of time intervenes between the individual's decision to enter reli-

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

gion and his acceptance by the legitimate superiors of the institute selected. Yet the decision to enter must be singled out as the first act of a religious vocation, since all the elements of an incipient vocation to the religious life are present, although not all are present to determine it to this or that order or community.

Indeed it is this note of permanence that lies behind the metaphor likening a vocation to a seed planted in a soul by God, and nourished and cultivated by human co-operation until it fructifies: "Now God Himself liberally sows in the generous hearts of many young men this precious seed of vocation; but human means of cultivating this seed must not be neglected."²⁴

2. What Religious Vocation Is

a. *Generically, a virtue.* On the basis, then, of an attribute of vocation, namely, its permanence, an actual grace may be excluded as the entity which establishes the essence of religious vocation. Moreover, permanence serves as a signpost indicating that the nature of this divine invitation will be found among the virtues. Fortunately more than a signpost is available to direct the course of the investigation. Nothing less than a principle incorporating into a terse formula the fundamental notion of a virtue limits the search to the realm of these supernatural habits. "Wherever is found a good human act, it must correspond to some human vir-

²⁴ Pope Pius XI, *On the Catholic Priesthood*, English translation (St. Anthony Guild Press, Paterson, N.J., 1940), p. 76.

tue." ²⁵ Simply enough, virtues are the proximate principles of good human acts both in the natural and in the supernatural order. Since the intention to embrace the religious life, that is, religious vocation as it is expressed in man, is definitely a good act, it must have as its principle a virtue. Since the object of this act is a supernatural one, the virtue must be one of the infused supernatural virtues. Generically, therefore, religious vocation consists in an infused virtue capable of producing the intention of entering the religious life.

b. *Specifically, radically: the virtue of religion.* The evident step to be taken is that of determining the exact virtue involved in religious vocation. The work of singling out this virtue by a process of exclusion may be facilitated, indeed completely omitted, in this case.²⁶

²⁵ *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 17, a. 1. For an explanation of this principle, consult Francesco de Vitoria, O.P., *Commentarios a la Secunda de Santo Tomás* (Salamanca, 1932), pp. 270 ff. Another way of stating the principle may be found in *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 23, a. 2. See also Passerini, *De hominum statibus*, I, q. 184, a. 2, p. 28, no. 10.

²⁶ As Aristotle and St. Thomas indicate (*Posterior Analytics*, II, II, 7-8; *Metaphysics*, VIII, I, 40), a twofold method of attaining a definition may be employed. Both advance from a nominal or descriptive definition, but each has its proper mode of procedure. The first utilizes a progressively descending division of superior genera and an ascending induction of specific differences to uncover the proximate genus and specifying difference. Thus far this method has been employed in this study. It has been somewhat truncated, however; for, by the use of common principles it has been possible to determine the most probable element of many possible ones without the need of undertaking the laborious process of eliminating all which do not contribute to a defining formula of religious vocation. The second method, which will be attempted at the end of the present investigation into the nature of religious vocation, demonstrates from the knowledge of the final cause or purpose of a thing its formal and material causes or nature.

On the basis of the common principle that means must be proportioned to ends, the field is narrowed down to the virtue of religion. The end of the religious vocation, the profession of vows, is an act of the virtue of religion; most probably, therefore, the means, religious vocation, must itself be an act of the virtue of religion.

The establishing of this fact requires simply the examination of the nominal definition of religious vocation to determine whether the reality signified by this formula preserves the formal reason of the virtue of religion. As has been seen, St. Thomas speaks of religious vocation as "*propositum religionis*," the intention to embrace religious life. Mere substitution of the generic notion of religious life as a way of serving God shows that the essential notion of religion as service or cult of God must enter into the definition of religious vocation. Again, the fact that the virtue of religion is located in the will, whose elicited act is intention, confirms the fact that religious vocation which is expressed in man as an intention must be an act of will perfected by the virtue that is concerned with the service of God, the virtue of religion. Hence this divine call must be an act of the virtue of religion.

c. *Specifically, actually: an act of devotion.* Owing to the fact that religion is concerned with the ultimate end, specifically God as the object of service and worship, this virtue not only elicits its proper acts but also commands the acts of the other virtues.²⁷ Consequently

²⁷ Cf. *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 81, a. 1 ad 1; a. 4 ad 1 ad 2; q. 188, a. 5.

it is necessary to determine whether religious vocation is a commanded or an elicited act of the virtue of religion. Should it prove to be a commanded act of religion, then religious vocation is not essentially an act of religion but simply bears the stamp of religion's ordination to God as something added to its proper substance, for the substance of an act is determined according to the eliciting virtue.²⁸ Consequently the nature of religious vocation will not be accurately determined until the eliciting virtue is isolated.

In this regard, this much certainly is true. When constituted in the religious state, a person through the virtue of religion does all for the honor and glory of God. This is the work of religion commanding the acts of the other virtues to fulfill the obligations of this state of life.²⁹ In vocation, however, the act involved is simply the intention or decision to embrace a particular way of life in which honor and reverence may be paid to God. This decision itself is what constitutes religious vocation; since it bears upon the proper object of the virtue of religion and that alone, it must be an elicited act of this virtue.³⁰

Specifically, religious vocation is an act of devotion, the primary and universal act of the virtue of religion. By this act of will man offers himself to God to serve Him.³¹ This it accomplishes by promptly dedicating to God the will, the faculty that can dedicate everything

²⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, Ia IIae, q. 13, a. 1.

²⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, IIa IIae, q. 81, a. 4 ad 2.

³⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, q. 88, a. 5.

³¹ Cf. *ibid.*, q. 82, a. 1 ad 1.

else.³² It alone among the elicited acts of the virtue of religion has the nuance of total dedication, whereas the other acts dedicate a particular faculty to God or offer definite things to Him. Thus in prayer the intellect is offered to God; ³³ adoration presents to Him the service of the body; ³⁴ sacrifice uses external things to protest His excellence; ³⁵ and so on. Each act has its own small segment of reality for its proper matter. Devotion offers man himself to the service of God. It alone among the elicited acts of religion can meet the demands of religious vocation's intention to dedicate oneself wholly and entirely to the service of God.

With the elaboration of the fact that religious vocation is essentially an act of devotion, the process of defining by way of successive divisions of subalternate genera has reached its term. No further qualitative distinctions, which are the basis of specific differences, may be made; such distinctions would have to be found in the formal object of religion and its act devotion, which in its simplicity cannot be qualified without changing it and thereby requiring a change in the virtue and act it specifies. The conclusion of this method of defining, therefore, establishes religious vocation as essentially and specifically an act of devotion.

(1) *Vocation in general to secondary states: an act of devotion.* It is to be noted, however, that whenever reference was made to the religious life in establishing

³² Cf. *ibid.*, q. 83, a. 3 ad 1.

³³ Cf. *ibid.*

³⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, q. 84, a. 2.

³⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, q. 85, a. 3.

any particular element of religious vocation, only the generic notion of this way of life was employed. It has been spoken of as a supernatural state of life, a life of service of God, and so on, and all these ways of speaking are applicable to all the secondary spiritual states of life. Two consequences of considerable importance follow from this fact. First, the successive genera and the ultimate species must be predicated of religious vocation not *qua* religious vocation but *qua* vocation to a spiritual state of service. Hence vocation in general to any of the secondary states of life is specifically an act of devotion, and this because the states are concerned with the dedication of man's work to the service of God according to the demands of the various states. As St. Thomas indicates, the spiritual states are constituted by the grace of Christ the Head as it is shared in various ways by His members and so contributes to the perfection of the Church.³⁸ Since the secondary states have for their object the performance of tasks necessary for the perfection of the Church and the Christian community, the gift of grace common to all the states and giving the fundamental connaturality, immobility or stability, and obligation required for a state, must be the virtue of religion, whose object is to perform the services owed to God and whose effect is to make this performance connatural and stable for man. Thus religion serves as the basis in men for the secondary states as faith and charity supply the principles necessary for knowing and loving God in the primary Christian state.

³⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, q. 183, a. 3.

As a virtue, religion affords the connaturality that comes from any habit perfecting human nature and establishing itself as a "second nature." As an infused virtue religion offers the stability in acting that can be lost only through mortal sin. Finally, precisely as religion it has the required relation to obligation essential to the integrity of a state. In effect, it is the principle in man that makes it possible for him to fulfill the injunction of God as recorded by St. Paul: "Whatever you do, do all for the honor and glory of God."³⁷ Accordingly the virtue of religion serves as the gift of grace fundamental to all the secondary states of life. Since vocation to the various states is ordered to these states as means to end in the order of execution (and in the order of intention the states are the objects of the act of vocation), vocation likewise must be an act of the virtue of religion, specifically the act of devotion by which the individual intends to serve God in a particular state of life.

(2) *Religious vocation in particular: a most intense act of devotion.* Secondly, the exclusive use of the generic notion of state of life and not the complete and specific notion of the religious state in particular indicates that further work must be done in the way of establishing a more complete definition of religious vocation. For one thing, there is the matter of distinguishing the act of vocation from what may be called the ordinary acts of devotion in which the will dedicates itself to accomplishing some particular task for God.

³⁷ I Cor. 10:31.

The various vocations themselves, all specifically or substantially acts of devotion since the virtue of religion is the eliciting virtue, must also be distinguished from one another.

Now any distinction to be made between the act of devotion which constitutes vocation and the simple acts of devotion will have to be in accord with the principle that virtues and acts are specified by their objects. Since the formal objects are in themselves simple qualities constituting an essential unity, no essential distinction, which is based upon qualitative differences in the formal object, can be established between vocation and other acts of devotion. Likewise, to assign simply a numerical difference by reason of time and circumstances would be an evasion of the question since here the acts are being considered in the abstract, not in the concrete as vested with all their accidents. Hence neither qualitative nor numerical distinctions will offer a basis for distinguishing the act of vocation from the other acts of devotion. Yet there is a world of difference between being devout in a single act that is accomplished in a comparatively short time, if not in a fleeting moment, and devotedly pledging oneself to a prompt service of God in all the acts of one's life according to the demands of the particular states. The root of the difficulty of distinction consists in this: on the one hand devotion is the common, universal act of religion to be found in all the acts of this virtue; on the other, the object of divine vocation, the embracing of a particular state of life, seems to demand a special act of devotion.

A quantitative notion, that of degrees of intensity, offers a valid basis to distinguish vocation from the ordinary acts of devotion and also to distinguish the various vocations one from the other. On this basis the conclusion of this investigation into the nature of religious vocation establishes divine vocation in general to the secondary states of life as an intense act of devotion distinguishable from simple acts of devotion by reason of its intensity, an element demanded by its superior object. Likewise religious vocation is established as the most intense of the acts of devotion and by its greater intensity distinguishable from the other divine vocations to secondary states of life. All of which requires considerable explanation and argumentation.

First of all, it is necessary to point out that "intense act" as used here does not have the same signification this phrase and its equivalent "more fervent" have when they are used to denominate the act in which man disposes himself for an increase of charity and the other virtues,³⁸ or in a more general sense when they are employed to describe the mode of augmentation of qualities and habits.³⁹ This latter signification requires that an increase in charity and all the virtues accompany the act of devotion which is vocation. Now it is possible that an increase of grace may be given at the time when divine vocation is actually expressed. Indeed, solemn profession in which religious vocation attains its full

³⁸ Cf. *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 24, a. 5-7.

³⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, Ia IIae, q. 52, a. 1-3; q. 56, a. 1; *Quaest. disp.*, *De virt. in comm.*, q. un., a. 11; *Ethics*, X, 1, 3.

and perfect expression has been likened to a second baptism in its effects, provided, however, that it is accompanied by a fervent act of charity. But there is no necessary relation between divine vocation and an increase of charity, just as there is no necessary relation between devotion and charity which demands that an act of devotion should cause an increase of charity. In fact, although devotion can dispose to an increase of love, charity is the cause of devotion, and greater charity the cause of an increase in devotion.⁴⁰ Simply enough, the act of devotion which is divine vocation does not entail an increase of charity. It is not, therefore, an act in which devotion is increased that is intended by the phrase "intense act."

Rather, the phrase means simply that divine vocation, because it has a greater object, the states of life, than the objects of simple acts of devotion, particular works, must itself be a greater act, that is, one which fulfills more perfectly the potentialities of the eliciting virtue than any of its other acts. Although the word is not used commonly in this sense in theology, still the reality is present and must be denominated. As a matter of fact the usage here is in complete accord with the principles of St. Thomas. As he indicates, the intensity of qualities, habits, and virtues has an objective reference. Thus we speak of a man of great strength and ability, precisely because he can do many and difficult things.⁴¹ As used here, the primary reference of intensity is also objective,

⁴⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, IIa IIae, q. 82, a. 3 ad 1, 2.

⁴¹ Cf. *Quaes. disp.*, *De virt. in comm.*, q. un., a. 21, ad 10.

specifically the reference is to the states of life which, as superior objects of the virtue of religion, require a superior act to attain them. This superior act has been called an "intense" one. Moreover, intensity when employed to designate an act that disposes to an increase of a quality or a habit has also a reference to the subject so far as it fills more perfectly the potentialities of the subject participating in the habit and the potentialities of the habit itself. In the present usage the subjective reference is also maintained, for the act of devotion involved in divine vocation fulfills to a greater extent the potentiality of the virtue of religion than do the common acts of devotion. Owing to its proximity to the end of human life, religion can command all the acts of life to attain that end. In the common acts of religion some small portion of that life is offered to God, whereas in the act of devotion which constitutes divine vocation many or even all the acts of life are dedicated to God according to the demands of the particular states. Involving a greater object, therefore, vocation demands a greater or "intense" act of devotion and consequently more perfectly fulfills the potentiality of the virtue of religion without necessarily involving any increase in the virtue itself. To denote this twofold reference to the object and to the fulfillment of the potentiality of the virtue, the word "intense" has been used in this study.⁴² As has

⁴² This reality is discernible in the acts of the other moral virtues. Thus as a special virtue with determined matter, fortitude is concerned with the following: strengthening the soul against fears that arise from any danger (*Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 123, a. 3); on a higher level with those fears that arise from the danger of death (a. 4); on a still higher

been shown, the reality signified is present in the act of devotion which is essentially divine vocation. Accordingly, by its intensity divine vocation is to be distinguished from the other acts of devotion.

Since all divine vocations are essentially intense acts of devotion, the question arises: How are they to be distinguished from one another? Distinct they must be, for the states themselves which are the objects of vocation are specifically distinct from one another.

In regard to establishing the basis for distinction among the various divine vocations, this much is immediately obvious. All the states considered in themselves are formally distinct by reason of their own special objects and functions in the Christian life. Nevertheless, as they fall under the virtue of the proper object of religion, the service of God, they are only materially distinct. All offer opportunities to serve God: hence they constitute proper objects for religion and its act devotion. But the service of God required by the different states differs according to the obligations of the various

level with dangers of death that arise in war; and finally it reaches its most perfect and most intense act in martyrdom (q. 124, a. 4, 5). Devotion itself has this same gradation without including vocation among its objects and acts. Here the greatness of the act depends upon the excellence of the faculty or thing offered to God by the various acts of the virtue of religion: external things in sacrifice, acts of the body in adoration, the intellect in prayer, and so on. Although this reality may be designated by another name, e.g., generous act, still "intensity" has a special aptitude and a basis in the principles of St. Thomas. In regard to both the act and the intention of the end, a twofold quantity may be observed. one on the part of the object, by reason of a man willing or doing a good that is greater; the other, taken from the intensity of the act, according as a man wills or acts intensely; and this is rather on the part of the agent (*Summa*, Ia IIae, q. 19, a. 8).

states. Hence they constitute materially distinct objects of the virtue of religion and its act of devotion. Furthermore, since the act depends upon its object for its species, a material diversity must be found also in the acts of devotion which constitute the various divine vocations.

Now, of the many differences to be found among the states one in particular may be singled out as containing in a general way the essential qualities of each state. This is the difference according to degrees of perfection, each state having its own excellence according to its essential being. Measured by this standard the religious life emerges as the most excellent state to which an individual may licitly aspire, and this precisely because it is a state of perfection.⁴³ Although in every state men serve God by performing the acts and offices proper to that state, religious bind themselves to a continual pursuit of perfection. The religious make a holocaust of themselves; the others simply offer their labors to the honor of God.⁴⁴ This is the claim of the religious state to greater excellence and essential perfection.

(3) *Conclusion.* Since this order of excellence constitutes a material diversity of objects when these states are regarded as falling under the virtue of religion, specifically, an order of excellence in the kind of dedica-

⁴³ The episcopacy, also a state of perfection, is a more perfect state than the religious state. (*Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 184, a. 7; *The Perfection of the Spiritual Life*, chap. 17; *In Matt.*, c. 19. Nevertheless under ordinary circumstances it is not licit to seek the episcopal state. (*Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 185, a. 1.)

⁴⁴ Cf. *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 184, a. 8.

tion to divine things, the particular acts of devotion which constitute divine vocations to the various states will have a corresponding diversity establishing them as greater or less in proportion to the excellence of the respective states. Hence degrees of intensity varying in proportion to the degree in which the different states fulfill the potentiality of the virtue of religion constitute the basis for the formal distinction of divine vocations among themselves. On this basis, religious vocation is distinct from others because of its greater intensity, indeed the greatest intensity possible to the virtue; for it fulfills perfectly religion's power of dedicating a man totally to the divine service. It is precisely this, therefore, that constitutes a religious vocation: *a most intense act of devotion, an act of will intending religion's greatest object, the religious state, and thus fulfilling perfectly the capacity of this virtue.* By substitution of the definition of devotion and its object in vocation, the religious state, religious vocation may be defined formally as *an intense act of devotion in which an individual intends to dedicate himself to a whole-hearted pursuit of perfection by fulfilling the evangelical counsels of perfection.*

V. The Nature of Religious Vocation: Material Consideration

I. SUBJECTIVE CONDITIONS OF VOCATION

A. *The material factors of vocation in general.*

1. Necessity of Consideration

To meet the demands of its object, the religious state, religious vocation must be an act of devotion greater in intensity than the common acts of the virtue of religion and the acts of devotion which constitute divine vocations to the other states of life. This conclusion derived from an objective consideration of vocation reveals the necessity of considering vocation from the point of view of its subjective conditions, its material factors. Because religious vocation is basically an act of the will, it requires like every act of the will a previous prudent judgment involving counsel in regard to the subject's capabilities of attaining the object desired. Furthermore, because it is an act of the virtue of religion, religion's medium must be established on the twofold basis of an individual's ability to pay his debt to God and God's willingness to accept man's tokens as payment on

an unpayable debt.¹ Hence knowledge of what God will accept and what the human faculty can pay are prerequisites to religious vocation. Again, because religious vocation is an intense act of devotion, the subject must have the spiritual powers necessary to produce the intensity of the act. Consequently consideration must be given to those elements that establish the human faculty, the elements that account for the intensity of the act of devotion, the elements in the subject which make the religious life desirable to him even as they make it possible for him reasonably to aspire to the religious state. These things, factors, or elements are what constitute on the part of the subject the material factors of religious vocation.

2. The Material Factors of Virtues in General

As was indicated, the intensity of the act of devotion demanded by the object of religious vocation does not necessarily involve any change in the degree of the virtue of religion possessed by a particular individual. Because of this condition of vocation, evidently the elements invoked to account for the intensity of the act required for religious vocation must be such that they exert at times a greater influence on the act of a virtue without actually increasing the virtue itself.

On the basis of the principle that the greatness of the act and the work accomplished follow the quantity of the virtue,² or, as it is sometimes phrased, perfect virtue

¹ Cf. *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 81, a. 5 ad 3.

² Cf. *ibid.*, q. 134, a. 2 ad 2.

has a perfect act,³ it seems that an advanced degree of the virtue is able to produce an intense act or great act without involving any change in the degree of the virtue. Such being the case, the virtue of religion in its advanced grades offers a sufficient explanation for the intensity of the act of vocation without recourse to any other additional factors.

For the present it may be admitted that the virtue of religion in its advanced stages might, as it were, stumble upon the religious life as an object adequate to its own capabilities for great things. It would not, however, directly intend the religious life as a great thing, and what is said of religion is true also of all other virtues, except only magnanimity, which alone seeks "the great as its formal object."⁴ Formally religion will intend the religious life according to its proper object of a way of serving God. That it is a great way of serving God is entirely accidental to religion. Not formally, therefore, but materially only, does religion perform a great work. Hence one must have recourse to factors other than the virtue of religion to discover the proper or formal cause of the greatness of the act of devotion which constitutes religious vocation.

Obviously, too, to assign an advanced degree of the virtue of religion as the proper and sole cause of religious vocation is to limit the religious state to those who least need it, to those already perfect. The reason for this is simply that the degree of any infused virtue is

³ Cf. *ibid.*, ad 1.

⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, q. 134, a. 2 ad 2.

measured proportionately to the degree of charity in an individual's soul.⁵ An advanced degree of religion would be present only where the whole spiritual life has enjoyed a vigorous growth.

Because the virtue of religion considered formally according to its proper object and radication in charity⁶ cannot account for the intensity of the act of religious vocation, we must look elsewhere to isolate the proper cause. Religion, however, cannot be discarded entirely, for it remains always the virtue eliciting the act of devotion which is religious vocation. Hence recourse must be had to the one element of this virtue not yet considered, its material factor called by St. Thomas the inclination to its act.⁷

Because of this material factor the moral virtues can produce acts of greater or less intensity at different times in the same individual without varying the degree of the virtue.⁸ Not the intensity of the virtue itself, but solely the intensity of its act admits of this variation. It is this inclination to the act of a particular virtue that explains why "one man can be more prompt to the act of one virtue than to the act of another";⁹ it supplies the reason why one saint's life will provide a splendid model for one virtue whereas another saint's difficulties in performing the acts of this virtue may be a consolation to others experiencing the same or greater

⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, Ia IIae, q. 66, a. 2.

⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, q. 65, a. 2; q. 66, a. 2.

⁷ Cf. *ibid.*

⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, q. 66, a. 1, 2.

⁹ Cf. *ibid.*

difficulties.¹⁰ Above all, however, it explains why individuals readily perform acts of one virtue and even at times more intensely than usual.

This material factor of the virtues, the inclination to their acts, has a congerie of causes. St. Thomas lists four elements that contribute to establishing a greater inclination to act: a better disposition of nature, greater gifts of grace, a habitual way of acting, and lastly a more penetrating judgment of reason.¹¹

3. The Material Factors of the Virtue of Religion

It is these same elements that constitute the human faculty, a factor of the medium of the virtue of religion. As St. Thomas states: "religion, . . . since it is a part of justice, observes a mean, not in the passions but in actions directed to God, by establishing a kind of equality in them. And when I say equality I do not mean absolute equality, because it is not possible to pay God as much as we owe Him, but in consideration of man's faculty and God's acceptance."¹² What God will accept He has made known to men through revelation. What man can pay is the unknown factor in the equation religion establishes as its mean. The task of discovering this factor involves taking stock of oneself and carefully estimating one's ability to pay. Gifts of nature and grace, acquired habits, skills, and dispositions, science—in brief, all the means a person has at his disposal—must be

¹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, a. 2 ad 2; q. 65, a. 3 ad 2, 3.

¹¹ Cf. *ibid.*, a. 2.

¹² Cf. *ibid.*, IIa IIae, q. 81, a. 5 ad 3.

listed among his assets and properly estimated. When this has been done, then does the virtue of prudence order that of the acts of worship acceptable to God, here and now this one done in this way and under these circumstances carries with it all the purchasing power that can be drawn from the resources at hand. This is what God asks; this is what the virtue of religion pays according to the ability of the human faculty made up of gifts of nature, grace, acquired habits, and science.

Stripped of the nuance of greater intensity, e.g., better gifts of nature, more penetrating judgment, and so on, the material factors of the virtues which account for a more intense act of a virtue constitute also one factor of religion's medium, namely, the human faculty. Reverence and subjection which man owes to God are religion's acts; God is viewed as the one to whom these acts of cult must be paid; and between these two factors the virtue of religion strikes that proportional equality, the formal element demanded by justice, rendering the worship paid a fitting and reasonable one in view of man's ability to pay. Thus the material factors of the moral virtues which produce more intense acts of these virtues enter also into the medium of the virtue of religion as its material factors.

4. The Material Factors of Divine Vocation in General

Because of their twofold function of constituting the human faculty of religion's medium and influencing the intensity of the virtue's inclination to act, these ma-

terial factors must be regarded also as the material factors of vocation supplying on the part of the subject the source of the greater intensity of divine vocation. Briefly, their influence on the inclination of the virtue of religion to its universal act of devotion establishes them as the subjective or material elements of divine vocation.

a. *Necessity in general.* Again, since on the part of the subject they account for the intensity of the act on the basis of which divine vocations are distinguishable, they are also the factors that enter into a person's choice of one state in preference to another. In effect, they constitute the human faculty, a person's fitness for a certain state in life. In a general way St. Thomas has indicated the need of a special faculty, suitability, or fitness for divine vocation. He speaks specifically of suitability for the religious life, but, *mutatis mutandis*, what he states is true also of the other states of life. Bearing the full brunt of his own authority and in its own right setting forth clearly the mind of Christ on the subject, the text deserves to be quoted in full:

The aforesaid counsels, considered in themselves, are expedient to all; but owing to some people being ill-disposed, it happens that some of them are inexpedient, because the dispositions of these people are not inclined to such things. Hence our Lord, in proposing the evangelical counsels, always makes mention of man's fitness for observing the counsels. For in giving the counsel of perpetual poverty (Matt. 19.21), He begins with the words: *If thou wilt be perfect*, and then He adds: *Go sell all thou hast*. In like manner when He gave the counsel of perpetual

chastity, saying (*ibid.*, 12): *There are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven*. He adds straightway: *He that can take, let him take it*. And, again, the Apostle (I Cor. 7:35), after giving the counsel of virginity, says: *And thus I speak for your profit; not to cast a snare upon you.*¹⁸

Lest the obvious be overlooked, a twofold role of these material factors in divine vocation has been established: (1) that of accounting for the intensity of the act of devotion which constitutes vocation; (2) that of establishing the suitability of an individual for a particular way of life. They accomplish these things because they are the factors influencing the intensity of an act and the factors entering into the medium of the virtue of religion by establishing the human faculty. In a general way, therefore, both the necessity of these factors and the precise function they fulfill in divine vocation have been proved. There remains to be shown the necessity of each factor in particular and the definite contribution each makes to establishing the suitability of a person for the various states of life.

b. *The necessity of the material factors in particular.*

(1) *Gifts of grace.* As has already been indicated, vocation, in the order of execution, is related to a state of life as means to end and hence must be proportioned to that end; in the order of intention the relation is that of act to object, and consequently the act of vocation is specified by the various states. It follows from an application of these principles that the elements constitutive of a state of life must be found also in vocation; in other

¹⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, Ia IIae, q. 108, a. 4 ad 1.

words, an analysis of the states of life lays bare the elements required for vocation.

The first and most evident necessity for the states of life, as here considered, is grace. Although state of life may have many varying concrete meanings,¹⁴ it is here taken to signify only those several spiritual states which contribute to the perfection and excellence of the Church.¹⁵ They have their juridical aspects, of course; but they are essentially spiritual, supernatural realities affording the individual the opportunity of taking his stance in life, his proper place in relation to God. As St. Thomas indicates, the basis of the states is the grace of Christ the Head as it is participated in various ways in His members.¹⁶ Essential to the object and end, the state of life, gifts of grace must accordingly also enter into the act and the means, divine vocation, and in such a way that the one called is rendered suitable for a particular way of life and capable of fulfilling the obligations of the particular state.

Consideration has already been given to the gift of grace that essentially constitutes divine vocation, the virtue of religion that enables a person to fulfill the obligations of service of God common to all the secondary states. However, each state has, besides the common ways of serving God, a special way proper to this particular state. Thus the married state uses the actions proper to the members of the household to serve God in His

¹⁴ Cf. *The Perfection of the Spiritual Life*, chap. 23.

¹⁵ Cf. *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 183, a. 2.

¹⁶ Cf. *ibid.*

members; the religious state protests the excellence of God particularly in the observance of its essential vows. Corresponding to these special kinds of service distinctive and constitutive of the various states and indicating in the states the necessity of a special gift of grace, special gifts of grace may well be expected in those who are divinely called to these states. In vocation these graces, which are integral parts of a spiritual state of life, will be found also as material factors exercising their function of inclining a particular person to a state of life. What are these graces in particular? Since it is our concern to treat in detail not all vocations but only religious vocation, a definite answer will be given only for religious vocation; for the others, more by way of suggestion than actual conclusion, possible gifts of grace may be proposed.¹⁷

Because of the supernatural character of the states of life, gifts of grace (a common one, the virtue of religion, and others special to the state) must be found as elements of divine vocation to these various ways of serving God. Because they exercise their influence upon the act of devotion which is divine vocation by affecting the inclination of the virtue of religion to act in a definite way, they are listed among the material factors of divine vocation. Among these factors, however, they reserve for themselves a special place. They are of primary importance. Of all these factors, they alone are propor-

¹⁷ For religious vocation magnanimity will be singled out as an indispensable subjective condition. By way of suggestion only, piety, the household virtue, may be regarded as exercising a similar role in vocations to the married state.

tioned to the supernatural character of the various states. The inclinations of nature, habit, and science might make a particular state desirable in a human way; these graces perfecting the natural inclinations make it desirable in a supernatural way.

(2) *Gifts of nature.* Again, a state of life signifies generically a position which is connatural to man and in which he may be at his ease.¹⁸ The secondary states imply specifically the taking of a particular stable stance in life from which a man may readily and easily direct to the service of God the kind of work he is equipped to perform. Part of his equipment will come from nature as inclinations, temperament, and the like. Accordingly the states of life in which man serves God will have to be in conformity with his natural inclinations and temperament; otherwise he will not be at his ease. Consequently nature, serving as the measure to determine which are truly states of life for men and which one of several is best suited to a particular individual, will also be found exerting its influence on divine vocation by inclining a person to seek the advantages of a state and more especially by inclining to a particular state.

To speak of nature as a contributing material factor to divine vocation involves an equivocation. First of all, something may be called natural inasmuch as it proceeds necessarily from the principles of nature. In this sense, religious, priests, and spouses would be born, not made so; obviously this is not intended here, for men must take some of the responsibility for the disposition

¹⁸ Cf. *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 183, a. 1.

of their lives. Secondly, the term "nature" denominates an inclination that proceeds from a principle of nature and reaches its full and perfect form under the direction of free will, e.g., virtues are natural in this way.¹⁹ In this latter sense nature may be considered both abstractly, i.e., under its most universal aspect precisely as a principle of being and operation common to many; and concretely, as it is individuated in this or that existing thing. Certainly there can be no doubt that the states of life are in conformity with, and adapted to, human nature universally considered. But there can be, and there is, considerable reason to question whether this individual is so constituted that he can conform himself to the demands of this or that particular way of life. Individual nature supplies one factor that will enter into the answer.

Human nature has a general inclination to various acts and offices. . . . But, since it is variously [realized] in various subjects, as individualized in this or that one, it inclines one subject more to one of these offices, and another subject more to another, according to the difference of temperament of various individuals. And it is owing to this difference, as well as to divine providence which governs all, that one person chooses one office as husbandry, and another person another. And so it is too, that some choose the married life and some the contemplative.²⁰

By way of establishing the suitability of an individual for a definite state of life and thereby making this state especially desirable to him, individual nature contributes to the genesis of vocation and to the distinction of

¹⁹ Cf. *IV Sent.*, d. 16, q. 1, a. 1; *Summa, Supplem.*, q. 51, a. 1.

²⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, a. 2; *Summa, loc. cit.*, q. 41, a. 2 ad 4.

vocations on the part of the subject. This is not, of course, a strange or novel idea. Rather it is a commonplace in vocation spoken of as natural attraction and suitability. Thus, on the basis of the first and most general characteristic of individual nature, namely, sex, women are excluded from the clerical state and are equipped to play their proper roles as mothers in the Christian household. Reducible to individual nature are also the various natural and canonical impediments to the various states, many of which eliminate particular persons from rightfully aspiring to some of the states. Lastly, as St. Thomas indicates, individual temperament positively influences the choice of a particular state by making that one more desirable to certain persons. Accordingly, individual nature may be accepted as the second of the material elements of divine vocation.

(3) *Habits and dispositions.* Habitual modes of conduct and penetrating judgment, or in more general terms, science, are in fact reducible to individual nature as elements derived from natural inclinations and perfected by human operations. In this regard habits are rightly spoken of as second nature, and science as the fulfillment of the natural desire to know. Nevertheless, since they play a special part in equipping for a state of life, they merit special consideration.

Because stability with its resultant ease of operation is required as an integral element of a state of life, acquired habits and customary modes of conduct which assure stability and ease must enter into divine vocation as material factors influencing the inclination of reli-

gion to its act of devotion. The principles indicating this necessity are again: acts are specified by their objects, means are proportioned to ends. That these modes of conduct enter into the material distinction of vocation on the part of the subject is evident enough also. Individual nature does, second nature must also, for habits simply perfect nature's inclinations and make them more intense.

Both positively and negatively habits and dispositions exercise their influence on divine vocation. Positively, as has already been indicated, by perfecting nature's inclinations to have a stable way of life and a special state connatural to a person's special endowments. Positively too, in term but not in principle, habits contribute to establishing the conditions necessary for the exercise of the gifts of grace involved in vocation. These gifts of grace are for the most part infused virtues and hence are not caused by human acts.²¹ Since dispositions contrary to the exercise of these virtues are not removed in the generation of the infused virtues as they are in the case of acquired virtues by the acts generating the habits,²² considerable difficulty may be encountered in the use of these virtues. By pitting acts contrary to these impeding dispositions, acquired habits clear the way for a more perfect and more intense operation of the infused virtues. So, by removing impediments they permit the establishment of conditions favorable to a positive influence of the various graces required for vocation.

²¹ Cf. *Summa*, Ia IIae, q. 51, a. 4; q. 63, a. 3.

²² Cf. *ibid.*, q. 65, a. 3, ad 2, 3.

In particular, habits of spiritual cleanliness and unyielding firmness of mind may be singled out as two conditions necessary for divine vocation in general. Summarily stated, the matter may be presented thus: a vocation peers above and beyond the limits of the universe to God, who is to be revered, worshiped, and served. It cannot tolerate having its vision blurred by sordid things below. Again, a divine vocation is an invitation from God to dedicate one's work to the service of God, the source and principle of man's being and operation. Loyalty and adherence to any principle is impossible without a firmness of conviction and a tenacity of purpose that correspond to the principle itself.²³ By removing the special impediments to these two dispositions required for vocation, dispositions which are produced in the subject by the infused virtues and gifts,²⁴ habits contribute to the genesis of divine vocation.

On the negative side habits and dispositions of long standing and great impetus to their acts can exercise a restraining influence on the genesis and endurance of divine vocation by placing impediments to the application of the mind to God and to a firm adherence to Him as principle. Thus, since purity of mind is required for this application, all inordinate contacts with temporal

²³ Cf. *ibid.*, IIa IIae, q. 81, a. 8.

²⁴ Spiritual cleanliness is especially the effect of faith and charity (*Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 8, a. 1), and the gift of understanding (*ibid.*, q. 8, a. 7), and sanctity (*ibid.*, q. 81, a. 8). Firmness of the will flows from sanctity (*ibid.*) and the virtues and gifts perfecting the appetites (*ibid.*, q. 8, a. 7).

and corporeal creatures that debase and ensnare the mind are serious obstacles to divine vocation.²⁵ Measured by this standard, the significance of Pope Pius XI's words in regard to sacerdotal and religious vocation is heightened: "The lack of vocations in families of the middle and upper classes may be partly explained by the dissipations of modern life; the seductions, which especially in the larger cities, prematurely awaken the passions of youth."²⁶

In a special way, therefore, sins of the flesh and their inevitable consequence of blindness of mind and torpidity of the senses²⁷ must be listed among the most powerful impediments to divine vocation. Again, somewhat less debasing of mind, but still sufficiently disturbing and distracting to impede vocation, is "the consideration of anything that does not pertain to things apt to awaken our love for God."²⁸ Since charity is the proper and immediate cause of devotion²⁹ and since charity needs the consideration of divine things to keep it enflamed, continued preoccupation with the investigation of matters not conducive to stimulating charity permits the fires of love to die out and to be covered with cold ashes. As a result devotion lags, so much so that it lacks the intensity required for divine vocation. Men and women, as a consequence, lacking the vision that sees their life's work as religion's service of God and

²⁵ Cf. *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 8, a. 2.

²⁶ Pope Pius XI, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

²⁷ Cf. *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 15, a. 3.

²⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, q. 83, a. 3 ad 1.

²⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, q. 82, a. 2 ad 1; a. 3 ad 2.

deprived of the determination of a prompt will to serve Him devotedly according to their ability, cannot or will not direct their energies to the task of taking stock of themselves to determine their suitability in respect to the various states of life. The task of choosing a state of life is left more to chance or whimsy than to careful, prayerful consideration and determined intention that flow from love and devotion. Habits and dispositions have played their full negative role, so that vocation will never guide them to embrace the life God has prepared them to enter.

(4) *Science*. A final factor remains to be considered. Since the state of life chosen must be connatural to an individual to the extent that his gifts of grace, natural talents, and acquired skills may be employed to best advantage in serving God according to the demands of the state, a penetrating judgment of one's own abilities and the particular opportunities of service afforded by the various states establishes its claim to being considered as a material factor of divine vocation. Certainly, knowledge is required, for vocation on the part of man is a human act and must be guided by reason. Judgment, too, is required, for vocation is the intention to serve God promptly and devotedly, and intention must always follow a judgment of reason establishing a goal for a particular individual. Finally, a penetrating, clear visioned judgment—for St. Thomas, *perspicacius iudicium rationis*³⁰—alone will suffice to produce the intensity required for divine vocation and this because the

³⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, Ia IIae, a. 66, a. 1.

heart does not run before the head. The determination of the will to serve God promptly reflects the perceptiveness of the judgment that God wills and deserves to be served.

From the point of view of the object of vocation, the necessity of a penetrating judgment stands out in bold relief. A position from which a person may easily and readily serve God by the performance of his daily tasks, tasks for which a person is well equipped by nature, grace, and training, this is what a state of life offers to men. Consequently the Christian must be able to penetrate the surface of daily activities to see in them acts that can be holy and pleasing to God and actually are spiritual sacrifices when they are vitalized by the prompt willingness of devotion to serve God.⁸¹ Then, a person realizes that in a state of life, by his work performed according to the demands of that state he fulfills the injunction of St. Paul: "Whether you eat or sleep . . . whatever you do, do all for the honor and glory of God."⁸² Lastly, not only the advantages offered to man by the states of life must be considered, but also the particular state most suited to an individual's faculty must be ascertained accurately that religion's medium may be an exact and just one rendering to God His due. This, too, involves a knowledge that pierces the surface of appearances and appraises the true worth of a man.

This penetrating judgment contributing to the in-

⁸¹ Cf. *Comm. on Ep. to Romans*, 12:1; *Summa*, IIa IIae, q.85, a. 3.

⁸² I Cor. 10:31.

tensity of the act of any of the moral virtues, in the special matter of divine vocation may be given the special name of a sense of vocation. Without it men and women might well follow the course of least resistance and establish themselves in a state of life unsuited to their needs and abilities. Thus the desires, urgings, and coaxings of parents might induce a young man or woman to aspire to become a religious in order to avoid parental disapproval. Then they are placed in the hazardous position of making a virtue of necessity as they strive to accommodate themselves to a way of life for which they are not properly fitted. A sense of vocation would have led them to judge and form their intention in favor of the joy and peace coming from a lifetime of service for which their gifts of nature and grace have prepared them rather than to barter these things for the fleeting peace permitted them by pleased parents. Again, a young couple might enter hastily into the married state to satisfy their passion for each other without a thought of that greater love for God which would incline them to express their love for Him through service of Him in those who bear His image. In later life they might even fail in their obligations to each other because they accuse each other in their minds of being the reason why they have not realized their vocation to another state of life. A sense of vocation earlier in life would have led them to view the immediate advantages to be gained in the light of the eternal benefits acquired from service of God in the state of life for which God has prepared them.

c. *Conclusion.* By establishing the suitability of an individual for a particular way of life and by influencing the inclination of the virtue of religion to serve God in a particular way, these four material factors contribute to the genesis and the distinction of divine vocation on the part of the subject. Their function in vocation is simply a particular application of their twofold operation among the moral virtues: (1) that of producing more intense acts by influencing the inclination of a virtue to its act without involving any change in the degree of the virtue itself; (2) that of establishing the human faculty on the basis of which the medium of the virtue of religion is established for particular acts. That they are necessary for vocation follows from the fact that they are the elements ensuring the connaturality, stability, and obligation essential to the states of life, the end of vocation and the object of the act of intense devotion which is vocation on the part of man.

B. *Material factors of religious vocation in particular.*

1. The Necessity of Special Factors in General

In the course of the analysis of the necessity and the particular functions of the four material factors of divine vocation, it was shown that these factors establish the suitability of an individual for a particular state of life. Accordingly differences among these factors contribute to the distinction of vocation by reason of the active principle of devotion, the intention to embrace a particular way of life. To phrase the matter in an

equivalent way, special factors establishing a special suitability are required for divine vocations to the particular, secondary states of life. This does not mean, of course, that differences will have to be found in each factor as the vocations vary, e.g., that the natural endowments of a man that establish his suitability for the married life will differ greatly, and necessarily so, from those that render a man a fit subject for the religious life. All the states of life are connatural to human nature; hence basically all individuals will have a similar disposition of nature's gifts of service to them in any of the states of life. Nor will it be necessary to look for great differences among the other factors as they contribute on the one hand to religious vocation and on the other to the other states, for the states of life are all developments of the same fundamental Christian life of knowing, loving, and serving God. It is the congerie of factors reduced to a unity in the prudential judgment that finds the mean for the act of devotion which is divine vocation that will differ rather than each factor differing for different vocations.

But there will necessarily be considerable differences found among the gifts of grace which are the principal factors influencing divine vocation. The states of life differ essentially among themselves and precisely as spiritual states contributing to the perfection of the Church according to the gifts of grace at the root of each particular state. Hence the graces involved in divine vocations must also differ among themselves as the vocations differ in order to preserve the conformity be-

tween means and end, act and object. Applied to religious vocation in particular, this means that gifts of grace will have to be special, whereas the other factors may or may not be similar to the factors involved in other vocations. This fact must be determined in each case according to the demands of each state. In the analysis of the material factors of vocation, therefore, special emphasis will be placed on the gifts of grace proper to religious vocation; brief consideration of the other factors will suffice.

2. The Necessity of Special Factors in Particular

a. *Gifts of grace.*

(1) *Problem involved.* At the outset of this investigation into the nature of the grace or graces required for religious vocation, we must point out first of all that our concern is not with the actual grace that reduces the virtue of religion into act in such a way that the resultant act of devotion constitutes a religious vocation. In strict accord with the Thomistic doctrine of physical pre-motion, this actual grace is presupposed as necessary to reduce a virtue from potency to act, or in more general terms that God move man through grace to desire any supernatural good.³³ Moreover, on the principle that God in His operations respects the nature of things by operating in each according to its proper mode, it is presupposed that His action as it is received in man, in this matter of vocation as an actual grace, conforms to the general rule governing the specification of acts,

³³ Cf. *Summa*, Ia IIae, q. 109, a. 2; a. 6 ad 2; a. 9.

namely, that they are specified by their object.³⁴ Consequently, since the religious state, the object of vocation, has a determined, specific nature, so too the actual grace reducing the virtue of religion to the act which is religious vocation must have a determined, specific nature. To speak of this grace as some general force that the individual channels off as he wills is to reduce the Giver of grace to the ridiculous figure of an anxious spectator wringing His hands in hopeful expectation that perhaps someone will decide to become a religious. The picture of a Director of souls leading men to determined goals by determined means, a special actual grace, is far more appealing, since it is far more realistic.

A special factor this actual grace must be; but with it we are not especially concerned in this investigation into the nature of the grace or graces necessary as material factors for religious vocation. Although this actual grace may in an instant effect all the conditions necessary for vocation in a particular person, as may happen also in justification,³⁵ still this is not necessary for it can operate its proper effect in a subject already disposed. At any rate, we are concerned with the disposition itself, not with the manner in which it is established in the subject.

Again, we are not concerned with that particular grace, the virtue of religion and its act of devotion, which constitutes religious vocation essentially. Sufficient has already been said about this virtue and its

³⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, q. 1, a. 3; q. 18, a. 6; q. 72, a. 3; *II Sent.*, d. 40, a. 1.

³⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, q. 113, a. 7; *IV Sent.*, d. 17, q. 1, a. 5, qa. 2, 3; *De veritate*, q. 28, a. 2 ad 10; a. 9.

necessity for vocation in the objective consideration of religious vocation. Nor are we trying to uncover a particular grace which may serve as a quasi-specific difference establishing the species of religious vocation and distinguishing it from all other vocations. This would be impossible. Specific differences according to the scholastic formula are predicated *in quale quid*,³⁸ that is, they signify that part of the essence which determines and qualifies the generic part in the production of a species. Since the object of the virtue of religion, like the object of every virtue, is simple, no qualitative essential distinctions may be placed upon it without changing it as an object and consequently demanding an entirely new virtue. As a matter of fact, the only distinction possible logically and the only one with a basis in reality has already been drawn. By reason of the object of divine vocation, the states of life which fall under the virtue of religion as superior ways of serving God, a greater or more intense act of devotion is required. On this same basis of intensity of devotion to correspond to the greatness of the object, religious vocation was established as the most intense act of devotion, i.e., the act that perfectly fulfills the potentiality of the virtue of religion because it is concerned with its highest object. This is the sole formal constituent of religious vocation known to us from a consideration of its object, the religious state, which as a kind of service of God requires an act of devotion and as a superior kind of service requires that this act of devotion be an intense one.

³⁸ Cf. Porphyrius, *Isag.*, 3, 3b, 32.

Now, on the part of the subject four material factors were singled out as the elements accounting for the intensity of an act of a virtue without varying the degree of the virtue. It was seen, too, that these same factors supplied the ingredients of the human faculty, an element in religion's medium, and further that they entered into divine vocation as subjective conditions accounting for the intensity of its act and at the same time establishing the suitability of an individual for a special state in life. Among these material factors, gifts of grace were singled out as being the principal elements, for they alone are conformed to the supernatural nature of the states of life and they alone are capable of influencing directly the intensity of the infused, supernatural virtue of religion. To ascertain the precise nature of the gift of the grace or graces which account principally for the intensity of the act of devotion constituting religious vocation, is the goal of the present investigation. This investigation has been undertaken to ascertain, not a specific difference of religious vocation, not the essential nature of this divine call, not the actual grace required to produce this call in act on the part of man, but the gift of grace that constitutes a material factor, a subjective condition, of religious vocation.

(2) *Solution: Magnanimity, the principal material factor.* Accordingly the primary condition that this grace or graces must fulfill is that of so influencing the act of devotion which is religious vocation that it will attain its highest object, in other words, that it will be

an intense act of devotion. This it must do without requiring on the part of the subject an advanced state of the spiritual life, for the religious life is by no means reserved for saints; nor may it necessarily involve any increase in charity and the virtues possessed by the individuals, for there is no necessary connection between devotion and charity which establishes an act of devotion as the cause of an increase of charity.

From the point of view of the object, it is clear also that, if this grace is to be considered necessary for religious vocation, some factor necessarily connected with the religious state must require its presence in an individual in such a way that without it religious vocation is rendered impossible. Briefly, the necessity of this grace or these graces and the nature of this supernatural element of vocation will be determined by the nature of the religious state, the object and the end to be attained by religious vocation. What grace or graces will fulfill these conditions? When this question has been answered, then it will be possible to give an accurate and meaningful definition of religious vocation.

First of all, as we have insisted on, it is impossible to eliminate from the ways of divine providence the fact that He occasionally makes His will so manifest that there can be no doubt about it in a person's mind. The case of St. Paul, whose vocation involved being thrown to the ground, illustrates this sort of vocation. It is stamped so distinctly with the marks of the extraordinary that it must remain always a way which men must neither expect nor demand. In such cases the extraordi-

nary enlightenment of intellect to know one's state in life and the movement of the will to desire, intend, and embrace this state are entirely the work of God's operating grace, the human will simply offering consent. Under the influence of this extraordinary grace, called by some *attrait*, the chosen one elicits the act of intense devotion in which he intends the religious life. It may be granted also that the other conditions required of the grace that qualifies as a necessary subjective condition of vocation to the religious life are fulfilled. In this extraordinary way, then, an actual grace may be the cause of the intensity of the act of devotion which is religious vocation.

Again, in some instances, under the impetus of grace there is an illumination of the mind and a movement of will so powerful that the soul seems to be moved to the service of God without any protracted deliberation or previous weighing of pros and cons. Such candidates for the religious life, as rare as they are specially gifted by God, know only this: they desire to be religious. They have no ready answer for the question "Why?"

Some theologians, however, can tell them why they have no answer, and at the same time offer a sound explanation of why they have a religious vocation. A superhuman element, the inspiration of the Holy Ghost working through the gifts, is the mysterious factor that impels and leaves the subject grasping for a reason to explain his actions.²⁷

²⁷ Cf. Garrigou Lagrange, O.P., "De speciali inspiratione Spiritus Sancti secundum charitatis augmentum," *Nenia Thomistica* (Rome, 1925), II, 211 ff. Cf. also *Summa*, Ia IIae, q. 68, a. 1, 2, 3.

Infused with charity and connected with it, the gifts are increased as charity is increased; and consequently, like charity they can be distinguished into three grades: the grades of the beginners, the advanced, and the perfect. The first grade of the gifts is ordered to the fulfillment of the precepts, the observance of all that is of strict obligation, the defense of the theological virtues, and so on, the second—and this is most pertinent to the present consideration—to the fulfillment of the counsels of perfection; the third, to the performance of heroic acts.³⁸ Specifically, the gift of piety, which renders a man docile to the Holy Spirit in matters pertaining to divine worship,³⁹ in its advanced stages and under the direction of the gift of science, induces its possessor to make the complete sacrifice demanded by religious life.⁴⁰

Both an extraordinary actual grace and the gift of piety in its advanced stages can account for the intensity of the act of devotion which constitutes religious vocation. Hence they may be listed as gifts of grace among the material factors or subjective conditions of religious vocation. Immediately a difficulty arises. St. Thomas insists that "from every effect can be demonstrated its proper cause," a cause which is one, not many.⁴¹ It seems highly irregular, then, to assign two causes for the same effect.

The force of the difficulty is such as to reveal that the

³⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 223.

³⁹ Cf. *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 121, a. 1; Ia IIae, q. 68, a. 4 ad 2; *III Sent.*, d. 34, q. 1, a. 2; d. 43, q. 3, a. 2, qa. 1.

⁴⁰ Cf. Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., *op. cit.*, p. 225.

⁴¹ Cf. *Summa*, Ia, q. 2, a. 2.

grace which serves as the proximate and immediate cause of the intensity of the act of religious vocation has not yet been uncovered. The graces listed above are not proper and immediate causes, but they do qualify as possible active principles producing the effect of religious vocation by reason of their influence upon the virtue of religion.

For an actual grace to produce this effect rather than its proper and immediate cause is certainly possible, since God can produce the effects of second causes without the operations of these causes.⁴² In this case, His action would be participated in the subject as an actual grace. This, however, is not the ordinary mode of God's operations in the world and in men; it is strictly extraordinary. Pertinent here is the decree of the Pontifical Commission in regards to *attrait* in the matter of sacerdotal vocation. For religious vocation it is equally true to state "that the requisite on the part of the one [to make profession] which is called [religious] vocation does not at all consist necessarily or ordinarily in a certain internal attraction of the subject or in inducements of the Holy Spirit."⁴³

On the other hand it seems necessary to admit that the gifts of the Holy Ghost may exercise their causality and produce the effect of greater intensity of devotion

⁴² Cf. *ibid.*, q. 105, a. 2 ad 3; a. 3.

⁴³ *A.A.S.*, IV (1913), 405. Preserving the vast gulf that separates the Thomistic school from Suarez on the doctrine of physical premotion, we venture to cite Suarez as authority for the fact and not the reason for the fact, that no extraordinary grace or extraordinary vocation is required for entrance into religious life. Suarez, *De religione*, tr. 7, l. 5, c. 8, no. 5.

required for religious vocation with a proper causality, but not univocal causality. According to acceptable Thomistic teaching, the advance stages of the gifts reach beyond the necessity of precept into the proper realm of the counsels. It seems reasonable to concede, therefore, that piety in its proper matter of service of God as a Father and in its advanced stages might command an act of devotion centered about the counsels of perfection essential to the religious life and thus effect by its imperium an act of religious vocation. In this way it would qualify as a proper cause. But would it be univocal cause, i.e., a cause that produces an effect of the same order and kind as the cause itself?

Now, owing to the superabundant generosity of God it is not at all an unusual thing to have the gifts produce the same material effects in a superior way that the inferior virtues produce in a way conformable to human active principles and the human mode of operation. Thus the gift of fortitude like the virtue of fortitude strengthens the soul in dangers and removes fear of perils; but the gift accomplishes this in a superior, divine mode giving to the soul a greater strength and a greater confidence of overcoming all dangers than the strength and confidence supplied by the virtue.⁴⁴ Thus the gifts operate more as equivocal or analogical causes than as univocal ones to which the effect is assimilated in kind. Since the gifts can produce this effect of greater intensity, it does not follow that an inferior grace, a virtue, must be ruled out as a proper and immediate cause.

⁴⁴ Cf. *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 139, a. 1 ad 1, 3.

Indeed the fact that the operation of the gifts in this matter of producing acts not commanded by precept but simply counseled is limited to the advanced stages of the gifts requires that another cause should be present in those who are not yet perfected in sanctity, yet perform the works of the counsels. Certainly in religious vocation there will be need of such a cause, since religious vocation is not limited to saints but is given to many in order that they may advance in sanctity.

In conclusion, therefore, we may state that both ways suggested can produce the effect required for religious vocation, the intensity of the act of devotion. But the first way, which postulates an actual grace, has proved itself to be an extraordinary mode in which the effect is produced without the activity of the proper and immediate cause. The second mode, involving the operation of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, reveals that an immediate univocal cause of the intensity of devotion remains to be considered. This will be the third mode, one that is not an extraordinary way and does not involve the operation of the gifts in an advanced stage. Hence it will not have any of the breath taking features of the grace of *attrait* nor will it be discernible solely in those advanced in the spiritual life.

What is this grace? Its effect, the intensity of the act of devotion, is what serves as a guide to the uncovering of this necessary condition for religious vocation. As we have indicated, "most intense" as used here to qualify devotion signifies that the act of devotion has for its object the greatest of the objects falling under the virtue

of religion and consequently fulfills the potentialities of this virtue. To effect intensity in this act, therefore, is to incline the will, the subject of religion, to this superior object not under the aspect of service of God, for religion itself attains the object under this formality, but precisely as superior. An effect in the order of execution, this element of directing the will toward an object under the aspect of great or superior is also itself an object in the order of intention and specification. Specifically it is the object of the virtue of magnanimity, which tends to its act always under the aspect of greatness or arduousness. It is magnanimity, therefore, the virtue which inclines to the great acts of all the virtues, that accounts for the intensity of the act of devotion which constitutes religious vocation. Magnanimity is the principal material factor of vocation; it is the subjective condition for religious vocation.

Because of its primary act and formal object, the tending to things that are great and difficult in themselves, magnanimity must be singled out as the virtue accounting for the intensity of the act of devotion involved in religious vocation. Further confirmatory evidence of the necessity of magnanimity for religious vocation may be obtained simply by paralleling some of the factors involved in the decision to enter religious life with the characteristic tendencies of magnanimity which flow from its primary act.

On the one hand, because magnanimity tends to great and difficult things it is characteristic of the magnanimous person to perform acts of virtue which are not

commanded by precept but are only counseled. On the other hand, the essence of the religious life is contained in the vows which are centered about the counsels of perfection. Moreover, magnanimity tends to concentrate on the one important thing in life; anyone who intends to embrace the religious life intends also, at least implicitly, to assume the obligation of a continual pursuit of perfection. Again, the greatest acts of the virtues are the most desirable things to a magnanimous man. In the act of religious profession, the act in which religious vocation attains its full and perfect stature, the virtue of liberality is pressed to its ultimate limits so much so that it borders on the proper field of magnificence; the limits of chastity are completely passed as perfect continence or virginity is vowed; obedience is made the virtue directive not only of single acts but of all the acts of one's religious life according to the demands of the proper rules, constitutions, and commands of a superior. In all truth, then, it may be said that, since the goal, the religious life, demands a magnanimous spirit, the means to attain that goal, religious vocation, must also feel the influence of this virtue.

Magnanimity's influence on vocation to the religious life may be discerned also in its establishment of the conditions requisite for devotion and for divine vocation. It is not the sole cause of these conditions for, as has been seen, other virtues and gifts produce these states of mind and will; but it does have a special ordination to establishing them and an effect worthy of special consideration. Magnanimity looks only to the greatest

things and has little or nothing to do with the lesser debasing things except so far as they contribute to the attainment of the greater goods. At once, therefore, magnanimity assures cleanliness of mind and avoids debasing contacts with inferior things. Likewise tenacity of purpose, the willingness to continue in the service of God despite difficulties, is ensured by magnanimity's integral parts, security and confidence, which contribute to making and keeping magnanimity striving to do things because they are great and difficult. On the positive side, confidence strengthens hope that all the helps necessary to lead the religious life will be given by God and also ensures that the person's conviction of his ability to lead this life with the divine helps already given will not falter. On the negative side, foolish fears and mental anguish that can lead a man to desist from striving to accomplish difficult things are removed by security. In these ways, magnanimity establishes the conditions requisite for divine vocation and so supplies an additional indication of the necessity of magnanimity for religious vocation.

The conclusion of this analysis establishes magnanimity as a necessary subjective element of religious vocation. But, one may now ask: "Is it necessary with that necessity which is called by Scholastics simple (*simpliciter*) necessity or is it merely a matter of that necessity which is properly called utility?" That it is necessary with the necessity of means called utility is evident enough, for it is most useful in producing the required intensity of the act of devotion. But there is a familiar

Aristotelian principle employed frequently by St. Thomas, in virtue of which the influence of magnanimity on religious vocation seems to be limited to useful necessity and to be excluded entirely from any claim to simple necessity. To indicate the fulness of perfection that comes to a man through the possession of the virtues, Aristotle formulated a pithy phrase: *virtus est ultimum potentiae*, "virtue is the ultimate perfection of a potency."⁴⁵ The principle may be phrased in a more revealing way: virtue is the disposition of the perfect to the best.⁴⁶ A virtue, therefore, of itself and without the intervention of any other virtue will tend to attain its highest object. This seems to be the equivalent meaning of this principle of Aristotle. Hence in the matter of religious vocation it seems that the virtue of religion will be the cause of its own intensity; it will itself seek its greatest object, for it tends to the maximum. Accordingly magnanimity, though useful, cannot be called simply necessary.

As the difficulty itself declares, the "ultimate" and the "best" referred to in the principle have reference to the object of the virtue.⁴⁷ The object in question, however, is not to be taken absolutely without reference to the virtue; rather it must be taken as it falls under the formal *ratio* of the various virtues. Accordingly the object is not called best because of its own inherent magnitude and excellence, but only so far as it is in conformity

⁴⁵ Aristotle, *On the heavens*, I, c. 11, 281a 15-18; St. Thomas, *Comm. on the heavens*, I, 25; *Summa*, Ia IIae, q. 55, a. 1 ad 1; q. 64, a. 1 ad 1.

⁴⁶ St. Thomas, *Comm. on the book of Physics*, II, l. 5.

⁴⁷ Cf. *Summa*, Ia IIae, q. 5, a. 1 ad 1.

with right reason; because its moral goodness and excellence depend on this conformity. In fact, it is this conformity itself that is the reality signified by the ultimate and best of the power. Reason is the measure of good acts; hence, like every measure, it is itself an extreme, the ultimate perfection of a potency.⁴⁸ When this conformity is established, regardless of the inherent perfection of the object materially or absolutely considered, then the potency has attained its ultimate perfection.

Accordingly the principle does not exclude the necessity of magnanimity in religious vocation. The virtue of religion tends to the maximum and attains the best in its every act, for to be virtuous its act must be in conformity with right reason. That the object attained may be, by reason of its own being, a great or small thing is entirely accidental to the formal perfection of the virtue of religion.

Because of the response, a second difficulty is suggested. Right reason without the influence of magnanimity might dictate that a person aspire to the religious life. Thus, as has been seen, the medium of the virtue of religion is established according to a proportion between divine acceptance and the human faculty, man's ability to make a payment on his debt to God. Now, if the faculty is great, a greater payment can be made, and right reason will dictate that such payment be made. Consequently, if the virtue of religion is itself great in a particular person, its medium established according to right reason will fall upon a great object; for, as St.

⁴⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, q. 64, a. 1 ad 1.

Thomas indicates, the magnitude of an act of a virtue is in proportion to the quantity of the virtue,⁴⁹ and the accomplishment of great things is proper to perfect virtue.⁵⁰ Religion itself, therefore, without the influence of magnanimity, can fall upon the religious state as its object.

In regard to the argument, its truth may be conceded in full without complete abandonment of the position that magnanimity is required simply for religious vocation. By force of the principle at the root of the difficulty, that the greatness of the work depends upon the greatness of the virtue, the necessity of magnanimity to direct the intention to religious life is denied not for all but only for those who are well advanced in the spiritual life. In them religion itself may be the sole principle of religious vocation. But, at the same time, the force of the principle is such as to underline the necessity of magnanimity in those who are not yet perfected in sanctity. For, lacking the power of great virtue, they must fall back upon the support of magnanimity's continual desire for great and difficult things. The difficulty establishes for them the simple necessity of this virtue's influence upon the intensity of the act of devotion.

But need we fully concede the objection and, because of its truth, limit the necessity of magnanimity to those who are not advanced in the spiritual life? It seems not, for the term "great works" is open to the common distinction of material and formal. Thus we may say in all

⁴⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, IIa IIae, q. 134.

⁵⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, ad 1.

truth that a great work is performed by great virtue materially so, but not formally so. Every virtue, regardless of its degree of perfection, directs the intention to the proper, formal object of that virtue. The greatness or smallness of the act elicited or the task performed is entirely accidental to the virtue, to every virtue indeed except magnanimity; it alone seeks the "great" as its proper formal object.⁵¹ Consequently no virtue directs the intention to a great work formally as great without the influence of magnanimity.

Now by its very nature the religious life must be considered a great thing, a great way of serving God. In other words, greatness is inseparable from the religious life. The religious life is not simply a dedication to God, it is a total dedication; ⁵² it is not simply a sacrifice, it is a holocaust; ⁵³ it is not simply a quest for perfection, it is a zealous, studied pursuit; ⁵⁴ it is not simply a renunciation of sin, it is a total withdrawal from even the licit things of the world.⁵⁵ In short, it is a great way of serving God; greatness is inseparable from its essence. Consequently, since religious vocation intends the religious life as a way of serving God, the virtue of religion must be singled out as the eliciting virtue. But it cannot elicit the act of devotion which is religious vocation without the influence of magnanimity, for it alone can desire and intend the greatness of the religious life. As great-

⁵¹ Cf. *ibid.*, ad 2.

⁵² Cf. *ibid.*, q. 186, a. 1.

⁵³ Cf. *ibid.*

⁵⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, a. 2 ad 1.

⁵⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, a. 3.

ness is inseparable from the religious life, magnanimity is inseparable from religious vocation.⁵⁶

b. *Other material factors.* Among the material factors, because only it is proportioned to the supernatural nature of religious vocation and because only it effectively views the religious life as a great way of serving God and consequently accounts for the intensity of the act of religious vocation, magnanimity must be singled out here as the most important subjective element or

⁵⁶ This conclusion establishes the simple necessity of magnanimity for religious vocation. Briefly, without magnanimity religious vocation is impossible. It does not follow from this that where there is magnanimity, there will be found also a vocation to the religious life. Magnanimous men and women do not dwell exclusively in convents and monasteries. Every state of life has its share of God's heroes. That they are not in religious life does not at all imply a defect in their character. There is a defect present, of course, for they did not follow magnanimity's promptings to pick the greatest absolutely speaking, when they chose their state of life. Technically, the defect must be called a negative one, i.e., the simple lack of the act; it cannot be called a privative one, the failure to place an act that must be placed. (Cf. *Summa*, Ia, q. 48, a. 3.) Magnanimity, because it is concerned with excellence, falls under the counsels of perfection rather than under the precepts. (Cf. *ibid.*, IIa IIae, q. 140, a. 2 ad 1.) Accordingly, no one is bound to the actual exercise of magnanimity except in cases where such exercise becomes a matter of precept because eternal salvation is involved. (Cf. *ibid.*, q. 124, a. 3 ad 1.) As is usual in the case of works counseled, men are bound to magnanimity in *preparatione animae*, i.e., they are willing to act according to this virtue should necessity occur. (*The Perfection of the Spiritual Life*, chap. 20.) In the same way, too, the religious life falls under the counsels and is not commanded. Hence ordinarily we may not speak of any obligation to enter religious life or to place the act of magnanimity required for religious vocation. No moral or privative defect, consequently, can be attributed to those who do not choose their state of life according to the promptings of magnanimity. The moral necessity of entering a religious institute seems to demand a previous revelation that one could not save his soul outside the religious life.

condition. The other factors, however, have a definite contribution to make which must not be overlooked. Accordingly, for the sake of completeness, a brief consideration must be given to each of the other factors.

(1) *Individual nature.* That individual nature plays some role in the determination of a person's vocation to religious life is clear enough. But what qualities or characteristics does nature bestow upon its favored children to make them so favored? The answer to this question must take into account the fact that all men are by divine invitation called upon to consider the religious life as a state suitable to themselves. Hence the natural qualities making an individual fitted for the religious state must be flexible enough to bring within their limits at least the majority of normal persons, otherwise mother nature leaves herself open to the charge of niggardliness in things useful or even necessary for life. As a matter of fact the endless variety of religious institutes both for men and for women is a sure guaranty that no fit subject will be at a loss in finding one for which his or her talents are suited admirably. Qualifications demanded, of course, differ in different institutions, just as their proximate goals and work differ. Nevertheless all such qualifications may be grouped under the heading of suitability to bear the burdens of religious life; more specifically they may be reduced to that physical and mental equipment which gives a well-founded hope that the candidate will not be found defective in carrying out religious observances. In the concrete, normal health is necessary, for the will to serve

God needs greatly the support of the strength to work, if intention is to pass into the realm of execution. Likewise, sufficient mental aptitude to grasp the essential notions of the religious life is indispensable. Briefly, the candidate's natural equipment must be such that it will not present insuperable obstacles to his leading a full religious life.

Consequently, although nature's gifts may well demand a central place in the spotlight when the mind deliberates upon the problem of choosing a particular religious institute, in the decision to embrace the religious life, the first act indicative of a religious vocation, nature's role is definitely a minor one. To gifts of grace especially, and to habits or dispositions, nature must yield the stage.

(2) *Habits and dispositions.* As we showed above, habits and dispositions contribute to the establishing of the two indispensable conditions of divine vocation, spiritual cleanliness and tenacity of purpose, by removing impediments to the virtues and gifts which effect these dispositions in a subject. But, since the virtue of religion and its universal act of devotion are so characteristic of religious life that they have given their names to this state, a greater spiritual cleanliness and a firmer purpose of will are required to ensure a more devoted service of God in this state than in the other states. Accordingly religious vocation has greater need for those habits and dispositions which serve to establish the conditions of devotion.

Habits and dispositions acquired from the exercise of

magnanimity must also be included among those that contribute to religious vocation, since magnanimity is a subjective condition of religious vocation. As already indicated, magnanimity exercises a special influence on the two conditions of divine vocation by reason of its primary act of tending to great and difficult things and by reason of its secondary act of affecting the passion for honor particularly by bolstering hope. Specifically, confidence in one's own ability and the gifts given to one by God to accomplish the difficult task of leading the religious life may well be expected to be characteristic of one who truly intends to follow Christ according to the way of the religious life. Furthermore, a vigorous hope that looks forward with certitude of attaining the helps God gives to His religious constitutes the principal contribution of confidence⁵⁷ to religious vocation. Security's peaceful and restful quiet of mind⁵⁸ must also be present that a person may carefully and prudently judge his ability to serve God in the religious life. Lastly, somewhat less important than those already specified but not so insignificant that it may be passed over completely, is the magnanimous man's custom of taking things easily and moving along slowly, the better to concentrate on great and difficult things.⁵⁹

Continual practice of liberality, chastity, and obedience, the virtues corresponding to the vows of religious life, evidently must not be overlooked as factors con-

⁵⁷ Cf. *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 129, a. 6.

⁵⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, a. 7.

⁵⁹ Cf. *Ethics*, IV, l. 10; *Summa*, *loc. cit.*, a. 3 ad 3.

tributing to religious vocation. Since the whole life of a religious is wrapped up in the observance of the vows and most probably in the exercise of these virtues, there is no denying the fact that the facility and delight that follow from the continued, unimpeded exercise of these virtues can and actually do make the religious life attractive to Christians. A greater inclination to perform the acts of these virtues, the result of magnanimity's influence, or at least the confidence of being able to perform them later on the basis of previous experience, will also contribute to the genesis of religious vocation.

It is on the negative side, however, that habits and dispositions can most affect religious vocation, and they do this by exercising a restraining or even at times a totally impeding influence. As we indicated above, all inordinate contacts with inferior things constitute serious obstacles to divine vocation and consequently more serious hindrances to religious vocation, since to the destruction of devotion's necessary condition, spiritual purity, there is added the note of opposition directly to liberality and chastity and indirectly to magnanimity in its urge to acquire the perfection of these virtues. Again, because the religious life concentrates on the pursuit of the perfection of charity, the continued preoccupation with things not conducive to stimulating love of God constitutes a greater impediment for religious vocation than for divine vocation to the other states of life.

Habits and dispositions contrary to magnanimity's quest for the great and difficult also exert a restraining

influence. On the one hand by way of excess, what may be called the pride of complacency, the inordinate love of one's own excellence, gives birth to a family of unholy daughters, presumption, ambition, and vain-glory,⁶⁰ the three vices opposed to magnanimity by excess.⁶¹ On the other hand and by way of defect, the pride of timidity that gives rise to pusillanimity⁶² may be singled out as a special impediment to religious vocation. Here pride leads one to depend too much upon one's own false judgment of his lack of ability to do great things. From God the individual has the ability to perform the proposed task; from himself he has the false conviction of his own inability to do anything worth while. Likewise a person's ignorance of his own powers and the helps he may expect to receive from God, an ignorance that flows from laziness of considering his powers,⁶³ foolish fear of failure that gives rise to worry and anxiety,⁶⁴ combine with pride to produce the pusillanimous man. This is the small-minded man for whom religious vocation may be something very desirable but something never to be considered possible for him since it involves too many dangers and difficulties for this weak person.

Preoccupation with this negative, impeding role of habits and dispositions may lead one to conclude that,

⁶⁰ Cf. Prümmer, *Manuale theologiae moralis*, 1, 285 ff.; *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 21, a. 4; q. 162, a. 8 ad 2; q. 132, a. 4 ad 2.

⁶¹ Cf. *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 130-32.

⁶² Cf. *ibid.*, q. 133, a. 1 ad 3.

⁶³ Cf. *ibid.*, a. 2 ad 1.

⁶⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, a. 2 ad 3.

since the remains of sins continue to abide in the soul and faculties of a penitent sinner, those who have been great sinners have little or no chance of desiring effectively to embrace the religious life or of fulfilling faithfully the obligations of this state. This much certainly is true: the presence of such dispositions to vice, in a way place a strain upon the ordinary graces given to a man to elicit the intense act of devotion which constitutes religious vocation. Perhaps this will be even too severe a strain for the common graces; and consequently the situation calls for an extraordinary grace similar to the one received by St. Paul.

(3) *Sense of vocation.* Nevertheless there is another factor contributing to the material side of vocation; its functions eliminate the necessity of recourse to a special, extraordinary grace. On the human side drawing something from gifts of nature and habits and dispositions, and on the divine side drawing something from faith and the gift of science, this element consists in the person's ability to judge more clearly and soundly than others. Thus a sinner acutely conscious of his defects and acquainted with the nature of the religious life might well view this state, under the impetus of grace, of course, as an excellent means of avoiding the occasions of sin and doing penance.**

Moreover, the sinner's intimate experience with the degrading rivals of God having ended in disillusionment and disgust with self, he may turn to God in a suc-

** Cf. *Contra retrahentes*, c. 2-10; *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 189, a. 1; *Quaest. quod.*, III, q. 5, 2. 3.

cession of disgusts. Keenly aware that his disgust means that everything else has failed him, he begins to see that this is one of the means God uses to make him hunger for things divine. He recognizes his own disgust as a distant cry of divine mercy, a faint echo of Christ's own invitation to the weak and weary: "Come to Me all ye that labor and are burdened and I will refresh you." ⁶⁶ Although the lack of merits causes him to shrink from God, he lets his needs draw him to the source of all goods. He begins to see that the natural capacity and desire for goodness that drove him into a frantic search for happiness everywhere but where it might be found and drove him to the depths of sin, will, under God's grace, bring him to the heights of the Christian life in the religious state, for no half measures will satisfy him. This man has acquired a deep insight into the meaning of a lifetime of service in the religious life, a lifetime of great service. He has truly a sense of vocation.

Although abstraction has been made for the most part from the role of grace while consideration was being given to these other material elements of religious vocation, they will never be effective independently of grace. Assuredly these elements have their proper roles to play in purging the soul of impediments to religious vocation and in disposing it to view the religious state as a desirable way of life, and that is why separate consideration has been given to them. But since vocation is something essentially supernatural, they would remain always dead and ineffective unless they were drawn up

⁶⁶ Matt. 11:28.

into the realm of the supernatural by the vivifying impetus of divine grace.

C. Conclusion.

1. Summary

The conclusion of the objective consideration of religious vocation established this divine invitation, as it is received and expressed in man, as a most intense act of devotion, i.e., the act bearing upon the virtue of the greatest object of religion, the religious state, and fulfilling completely the potentialities of this virtue. To account for the intensity of this act on the part of the subject, four elements were singled out. These are the factors that constitute the human faculty on the basis of which the medium for the virtue of religion is established; they are also the material factors that account for the intensity of the acts of the virtues without varying the degree of the virtue, a function performed by reason of their influence upon the inclination of a virtue to its proper acts. Consequently they must also be the material factors of divine vocation entering into its constitution as subjective conditions influencing the intensity of the act of devotion.

The necessity of each factor for divine vocation in general was established on the basis of the integral elements of the states of life, the end and object of divine vocation. Thus the supernatural character, connaturality, stability, and reference to obligation of a state of life were seen to require as factors of vocation gifts of grace and of nature, habits and dispositions, and science. Fol-

lowing this an attempt was made to determine the exact contribution of each factor to divine vocation in general and then to religious vocation in particular.

One of these factors, gifts of grace, because they are the only ones proportioned to the supernatural entity of the various states, was presented as the principal element of the various vocations. In religious vocation the gift of grace accounting for the intensity of the act of devotion was specified as the virtue of magnanimity. This virtue was seen to be necessary because only it regards the religious state formally as a great way of serving God, and the religious life cannot be truly and adequately intended unless the intention is directed to it precisely as great or difficult because of its sheer greatness. Magnanimity, therefore, was proposed as the proper cause of the intensity of the act of devotion which constitutes religious vocation, and consequently must be considered as a necessary subjective or material element of religious vocation.

Briefly, the formal or objective consideration of religious vocation established it as a most intense act of devotion; the material or subjective consideration resulted in the presentation of magnanimity as an indispensable condition of religious vocation. Combined, these two elements establish religious vocation on the human side as an act of devotion in a magnanimous mode. The essential notions of these two factors, greatness or difficulty for magnanimity and prompt dedication to the worship or service of God for devotion, placed in relation to their proper object in religious

vocation, the religious state, permit the following definition of religious vocation: *a person's intention elicited by the virtue of religion to dedicate himself promptly (devotedly) and unreservedly or generously (magnanimously) to the great and difficult service of God by fulfilling the three vows of religion concerned with the evangelical counsels of perfection.*

We believe that this real definition of religious vocation in terms of the virtues of religion and magnanimity is simply an explanation of the nominal or descriptive definition which St. Thomas gives to this divine invitation. He has presented religious vocation as an essentially supernatural reality in man expressed in the intention to embrace the religious life, *propositum religionis*. This is his declaration of the reality of an internal vocation in the passive sense of the word, i.e., as it is received in the soul of man corresponding to the motion of God's grace. This was the starting point of the investigation into the essential nature of religious vocation. The method employed, that of division of successive subordinate genera and the various principles and definitions employed in the course of the investigation, has been derived from St. Thomas' teachings on these matters. Granted, then, that the use of the method has been exact and the application of principles and definitions has been correct, we may speak of the theory of religious vocation proposed in these pages as Thomistic, or according to the principles of St. Thomas.

In the course of the investigation into the nature of the grace required on the part of the subject to account

for the intensity of the act of devotion, it was discovered that, although magnanimity was the proper and univocal cause, the gift of piety in its advance stages might be considered an analogical or equivocal cause, and an extraordinary actual grace might be conceived of as the action of God received in man producing an effect without the intervention of the proper and immediate cause. By way of clarification of this matter, the reader may be helped by the following suggestive, but by no means comprehensive, outline of the order existing among these ways in which a religious vocation may be manifested.

1. The extraordinary graces involved in the attraction theory and certain special graces may be given to persons who in general lack the dispositions favorable to a religious vocation. These dispositions, of course, are those required for an unimpeded act of devotion and magnanimity; and they include knowledge of the religious life, an inclination of the will toward this way of life, and on the negative side absence of those habits of life that are contrary to devotion and magnanimity. Of their nature transitory, these graces may be given again from time to time both before and after entrance into a novitiate to sustain the candidate in his good intention. In the course of time, however, the instructions given by directors or superiors in a novitiate will, or at least are calculated to, supply for the defect of knowledge; and the exercise of the virtues of religion and magnanimity in the observances of religious life will remove unfavorable dispositions. Then magnanimity and devo-

tion can exercise their own proper functions in religious vocation. Hence these extraordinary graces seem to be ordered to the normal manner in which religious vocation is manifested in such a way that they supply for the defects of the conditions ordinarily required for religious vocation.

2. The ordinary or normal mode will be present when magnanimity and devotion are more or less unimpeded in their operations and actually do exercise their proper functions. Since the operation of moral virtues is involved, the medium of which is not always realized in the same way or established in exactly the same mode,⁶⁷ religious vocation will not always express itself in each instance in exactly the same mode with a constant, invariable degree of firmness of intention. In other words, a person need not be perfectly disposed for the operation of religion and magnanimity. It suffices simply that these virtues be operative. Because the dispositions of the subject, in the matter of vocation, the material factors of religious vocation, admit of degrees of intensity, religious vocation itself is capable of growth indirectly by way of removing impediments and directly by way of merit proportionately to the increase of charity.

3. At the peak of religious vocation stands the impelling force of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, piety working under science, both in their advanced stages. This is the grade of perfection to which the other modes of manifestation of religious vocation seem to be ordered,

⁶⁷ Cf. *Summa*, Ia IIae, q. 66, a. 1; *Ethics*, II, l. 11.

to which the subject should aspire. It is thus a religious vocation, so far as this is possible, becomes guaranteed.

2. Demonstration of the Theory

The better to emphasize the functions of magnanimity and devotion in religious vocation and at the same time to establish the conclusion advanced in this study on a foundation as firm as possible, the second way of attaining a definition by way of demonstration may now be attempted. The starting point is St. Thomas' nominal definition of religious vocation, *propositum religionis*, the intention to embrace the religious life. The definition itself manifests the final cause or goal of religious vocation, the embracing of the religious state. Furthermore, sufficient has already been said about the nature of the virtue of religion, its act devotion, and the virtue of magnanimity, to suppose that this element of the demonstration is known. There remains simply the task of uncovering the immediate principle on the basis of which the final cause of religious vocation may be established as the determinant of the nature of this divine invitation.

Frequent use has already been made of the common principle that means must be proportioned to ends, to establish as probable the conclusion that an act of devotion constitutes a religious vocation. Here religious vocation was considered in the order of execution as a means to entrance into the religious life. Since the end requires an act of devotion, so religious devotion as means involves an act of devotion. Again, the common

principle that the order of causes corresponds to the order of ends mediated the establishment of magnanimity as the cause on the part of the subject of the intensity required for the act of devotion which constitutes religious vocation. These probable conclusions were extremely valuable in the preceding investigation into the nature of religious vocation inasmuch as they pointed out the single elements among a number of possible ones that might enter into the real definition of this divine call. They are valuable here, too, in affording us the previous knowledge of the conclusion required for demonstration. Moreover, by reason of the previous investigation there is available, it is believed, certain knowledge of the conclusion, but not with the certitude that comes from demonstration. Consequently all the prerequisites for a demonstration are present,⁶⁸ and the exact problem is known: to discover the proper and immediate principle that establishes devotion and magnanimity as the elements of religious vocation, a principle that must be in the order of final causality since the demonstration argues from the final to the formal and material causes. This will uncover the medium of demonstration.

Now, since an act of virtue is involved in religious vocation and in the pronouncing of vows, the principle will be concerned with the mode of specification of acts and virtues. Such a principle will establish the species of the act of virtue involved in religious vocation and

⁶⁸ Cf. Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, I, c. 1, 71a 1-25; St. Thomas, *Comm. on Post. Anal.*, I. 1.

will, evidently enough, be in the order of final causality. To uncover the principle, attention is to be shifted simply from the order of execution to the order of intention where acts of virtues are conceived as being ordered to their objects as to a final cause: acts are specified by their objects. On the basis of this principle it is clear that, since religious vocation is nominally defined as an act of intention bearing upon entrance into the religious life as its proper object, the determination of the real definition must come from this object. Consequently, because entrance into the religious life is accomplished by an act of devotion involved in the profession of vows, religious vocation, the act by which this object is intended, must also be an act of devotion. That this act must be an intense one in the sense already explained is clear from the totality of the offering intended to be made in religious vocation, a matter of intending to serve God not in a single act or a few acts but in all the acts of one's life, a matter of intending a complete stripping of oneself of all that men hold precious, the better to serve God.

Devotion, therefore, attaining its greatest object, in other words, a most intense act of devotion, constitutes formally a religious vocation as it is expressed in man. This act, of course, is elicited by the virtue of religion which looks upon its object, in this case the religious state, as a way of serving or honoring God. That the mode of service involved is great or small, is accidental to this virtue of religion. Consequently the greatness of the religious state is not directly intended by the virtue

of religion in its act of devotion. Only one virtue directly or formally intends greatness as its proper object, the virtue of magnanimity. That the religious life may be intended directly and adequately, an act of magnanimity must also exercise its influence. In other words, devotion is not sufficient for religious vocation. Devotion intends only to serve God; the religious state, an object of devotion, demands a total, a complete, a great, a difficult service of God. This second and completing element of the religious state, its essential greatness, is itself the object of a virtue, the virtue of magnanimity. For the religious state to be adequately intended, it must be intended by devotion as a way of serving God and by magnanimity as great or difficult. Briefly, magnanimity's influence in directing virtues to their highest and best objects must be found also in religious vocation as a subjective condition.

On the basis of these demonstrations the theory of religious vocation presented in these pages may be stated summarily. Because the religious state offers a way of serving God, religious vocation, the act in which this state is intended by a particular person, must view it and intend it precisely as a way of serving God; this is the proper act of devotion. Since the religious state is a great way of serving God, for it to be adequately intended, magnanimity, which alone intends "the great," must exercise the influence of its primary and proper act upon the virtue religion which elicits religious vocation. Accordingly the way of demonstration leads to an intense act of devotion in a magnanimous mode as the

complete and adequate definition of religious vocation defined nominally by St. Thomas as "*propositum religionis*."

II. THE SUBJECT OF RELIGIOUS VOCATION

A. Qualities. On the basis of the preceding analysis of the formal and material elements of religious vocation, the following description of the subject of this divine call may be given. Presupposed to what may be called the ordinary or usual religious vocation, is a subject of normal health and with sufficient strength to perform the work of a religious; with the mental capacity to grasp the essential meaning of the religious life as a great way of serving God and to digest fairly well, at least to the extent of being able to put into practice, the direction and counsel received from those in a position to give it; free from those powerful inclinations to sins and the impediments to devotion and magnanimity which result from recent or still enduring habits of sin; ⁶⁹ and finally in the state of grace when the divine vocation is constituted, with a will informed by the virtues of religion and magnanimity from which vocation to the religious life flows.

B. Activity. Such a prospective candidate for the religious life, under the influence of divine grace, would think the matter out in times of prayer and meditative

⁶⁹ This condition must not be considered a deterrent from entrance into religion; rather it is a state of the subject which will make somewhat difficult the deliberation necessary ordinarily for a religious vocation.

reflection. Reflection and consideration are necessary; for the acts of devotion and magnanimity, like every act of the will, proceed from some consideration, since the object of the will is a known good.⁷⁰ Assured by taking stock of himself that he is not impeded by nature from undertaking the burdens of the life of a religious, he should then consider the burdens and blessings of that life, surveying them in relation to his own inclinations, needs, and ability. In this matter there is no need of protracted deliberation, since a person who enters religion does not trust in his own powers to sustain him, but in the power of God.⁷¹

After questioning his motives, and confident that his intention is an honest one of serving God, he is ready to decide whether he should enter the religious life. Throughout his deliberation he has been guided by faith reinforced chiefly by the gift of science, which judges both speculatively and practically of divine things on the basis of created things. The virtues of religion and magnanimity are present to perform their functions; the actual graces required to establish a religious vocation will not be denied.

C. *Effects that serve as signs of religious vocation.*
Since the acts of the virtues of magnanimity and religion and the operations of the other material factors of religious vocation have, in the subject, effects which are

⁷⁰ Cf. *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 82, a. 3.

⁷¹ Cf. *Contra retrahentes*, c. 9; *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 189, a. 10.

capable of external scrutiny, it is possible to speak of signs of religious vocation. Again, since there is a definite order of superiority among the factors of religious vocation, it is possible also to establish an order of importance among these various signs. Thus three factors may be singled out as the principal signs of religious vocation:

- 1) the absence of impediments, both natural and legal;
- 2) the firm resolution to serve God, with His help, as a religious;
- 3) a generous, magnanimous spirit which recognizes the difficulties of the life and is willing to try to meet them.

These are the measurable, tractable, chief indications of the presence of a religious vocation.⁷² Accompanying the resolution there may or may not be any of the positive inclinations of will demanded by the followers of the attraction theory. The presence or absence of these inclinations will depend, of course, on the mode of

⁷² These signs are suggested by the word of Holy Scripture: "If thou wilt be perfect . . . ; He who can take it". . . . The first two are explicitly stated, the third implicitly, in the works of the Scholastics, and are admitted by most modern theologians as sufficient signs. Cf. *Summa*, Ia IIae, q. 108, a. 1 ad 1; IIa IIae, q. 189, a. 10; Cajetan's commentary on the latter article; Suarez, *On the Religious State*, II, 7, Bk. V, chap. 8, nos. 6-8; Passerini, *On the States of Men*, Commentary on the IIa IIae, q. 189, a. 10, nos. 5, 7, 8; St. Alphonsus, *Choice of a State of Life*, loc. cit., p. 412; St. Francis de Sales, Letter 472: A real vocation is nothing less than a firm and constant purpose which a person has to serve God in the manner and place to which God calls him. This is the best possible sign of a true vocation.

God's manifestation of His divine call to the individual. Hence the value of attraction as a sign of vocation must remain subsidiary to that of firmness of resolution.

Secondary signs of religious vocation will consist chiefly in the effects, on an individual, of devotion and magnanimity, the principal elements of this divine call. Among the effects of devotion pertinent to religious vocation may be listed the following.

1) Spiritual joy. Devotion itself is caused chiefly by meditation on the divine excellence and goodness.⁷³ Consideration of this kind produces of itself spiritual joy, for according to the Psalmist: "I was mindful of God, and I rejoiced."⁷⁴ In the matter of religious vocation this joy will manifest itself in a fundamental satisfaction in the choice of the life that has been made.

2) Peace of mind. Since charity is the cause of devotion⁷⁵ and also of peace,⁷⁶ mental quietude may be expected to follow the decision to enter the religious life; for the tranquillity of order which is peace is established by the person's intention to subordinate himself as servant to His Lord and Master. Security also, the condition of magnanimity, may be expected to contribute its proper share to furnishing peace of mind.⁷⁷

3) A facility and promptitude in performing the various acts of religion and the acts of the other virtues. The reason for this flows from the fact that devotion con-

⁷³ Cf. *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 82, a. 3, 4.

⁷⁴ Ps. 76, 4.

⁷⁵ Cf. *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 82, a. 2 ad 2; a. 3.

⁷⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, q. 29, a. 3.

⁷⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, q. 129, a. 7.

sists essentially in promptness to serve God ⁷⁸ and that the universal act of religion wraps itself around all the acts elicited and imperated by this virtue.⁷⁹

Magnanimity also has several distinctive properties that may be listed as secondary signs of religious vocation.⁸⁰

1) A generous spirit that leads the magnanimous person freely to extend whatever help he can give to others, according to the demands of a virtuous act, without expecting or seeking any compensation in return. To this may be reduced also a perfection of gratitude that seeks always to return a greater gift than the gifts received.

2) A love of virtue, for the great acts of the virtues are the things the magnanimous man desires most of all. At the same time he will have an abhorrence of anything that is contrary to this love of virtue and that implies a defect of a generous spirit.

3) Frankness and honesty in dealings with others, since he avoids all simulation and adulation which betray a small-minded man.

4) A moderate delight in all honors offered. Thus the magnanimous man, recognizing the great honor bestowed in a religious vocation, would manifest a restrained delight in the decision he has made to enter the religious life.

5) A balanced appreciation of the things of this

⁷⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, q. 82, a. 1.

⁷⁹ Cf. *ibid.*

⁸⁰ The properties listed here are taken from those assigned by St. Thomas and Aristotle. Cf. *Ethics*, IV, l. 10; *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 129, a. 3 ad 3; ad 5; a. 4 ad 2.

world. He will neither exalt nor totally despise material things, for he recognizes their value as secondary to, yet contributing to, his principal goal, that of performing the great works of the virtues. Consequently he will manifest moderation both in times of prosperity and in periods of adversity.

6) Avoidance of precipitancy and involvement in many affairs, for he intends great things, which are few and require careful consideration.

VI. Practical Norms

I. PRINCIPAL CAUSES OF RELIGIOUS VOCATION

Whether it is a question of one of the extraordinary modes or of the ordinary way of religious vocation, obviously both God and the human subject are involved as principal causes; God, as primary; the subject, as secondary. With the exception of the mode depending for its efficacy upon the activity of the gifts in their advanced stages and consequently, like the gifts classified as eminently operating grace, the exciting graces granted in vocation are cooperating grace; for the human will both moves and is moved to will the religious state as a means to attain the goal of life.¹ Briefly, the process is a matter of God's moving the will of a man in the state of grace to the exercise of an infused, supernatural virtue, the virtue of religion. In such a motion of the free will, the will is both moved by God, and moves itself in virtue of an anterior deliberation, which is indispensable to all such acts. Throughout, the deliberation is guided by faith and its adjunct, the gift of science, and proceeds in a human mode.

¹ Cf. *Summa*, Ia IIae, q. 111, a. 2.

II. INSTRUMENTAL CAUSES

Definitely a factor contributing to the genesis of a religious vocation, the presence of deliberation in a human mode is a guaranty that men can prepare themselves to receive the divine invitation, both by way of increasing their devotion and magnanimity and by removing impediments to the exercise of the virtues of religion and magnanimity. For the present, attention must be focused on the all-important causes of devotion and the conditions of magnanimity, the means by which man can cultivate the seeds of religious vocation.

A. *Internal causes and conditions of religious vocation.*

1. Positive Causes and Conditions

a. *Causes of devotion.*

(1) *Charity.* First of all, the role of charity as the proximate cause of devotion calls for brief consideration.² Immediately uniting the will to God, charity impels a man to surrender himself to the service of God, i.e., to the exercise of the virtue of religion, as a protestation of love. Related, therefore, to religion as its principle,³ charity also flows into its primary act, devotion. "Charity causes devotion, inasmuch as love makes one ready to serve one's friend, and at the same time charity feeds on devotion. Even so all friendship is safe-

² Cf. *ibid.*, q. 82, a. 3.

³ Cf. *ibid.*, a. 2 ad 1.

guarded and increased by the practice and consideration of friendly deeds." ⁴

(2) *Meditation*. Secondly, the intrinsic cause of devotion on our part is meditation or contemplation. An act of the will stripping itself the better to serve God, devotion needs the loving consideration of the goodness of God that prompts a man to surrender himself to God without reserve. No substitute for meditation will be tolerated; consideration, however, of objects other than God's goodness is allowed. Thus, another "consideration is that of man's own shortcomings, on account of which he needs to lean on God . . . ; and this consideration shuts out presumption whereby man is hindered from submitting to God, because he leans on his own strength." ⁵ Again, the goodness of God, though in itself the strongest incentive to love, and hence to devotion, is far too brilliant to be seen clearly by the myopic eyes of the human mind. Hence men need "a guiding hand, not only to the knowledge, but also to the love of divine things by means of certain sensible objects known to us. Chief among these is the humanity of Christ. . . . Wherefore matters relating to Christ's humanity are the chief incentive to devotion." ⁶

The meditation or contemplation, of which St. Thomas speaks here, is that perfect form of intellectual consideration deriving its force and vigor from charity in the will, whose impulse is to the reality as it exists in

⁴ *Ibid.*, ad 2.

⁵ *Ibid.*, ad 3.

⁶ *Ibid.*, ad 2.

itself, and terminating, even as it began, in an act of the will.⁷ Thoroughly wrapped up in the theological virtues, this perfect meditation or contemplation is ordered primarily to an increase of charity through a consideration of the details of divine goodness furnished by a faith-illuminated mind, and it is through the overflow of this love that devotion is caused and increased. Secondly, this meditation also serves as an incentive for greater hope from the realization that God is not yet perfectly possessed, coupled with the knowledge that His power alone is the guaranty of attainment. In this second way, devotion profits by hope's elimination of an archenemy of both, presumption, or the trust in one's own power that keeps a man from surrendering to God.

There is another form of meditation, an imperfect kind that in a way debases itself by ordering the consideration to a practical purpose, to the operation of the moral virtues, to the rectification of the appetites. Although this latter goal must never be established as the sole and exclusive purpose of meditation, yet it is both useful and even necessary occasionally, especially when the question is of a spiritual infant's meditation. Indeed, it is this imperfect kind that can serve as a most

⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, q. 180, a. 7 ad 1: Although the contemplative life consists chiefly in an act of the intellect, it has its beginning in the appetite, since it is through charity that one is urged to the contemplation of God. Since the end corresponds to the beginning, it follows that the term also and the end of the contemplative life has its beginning in the appetite since one delights in beholding the object loved, and the very delight in the object seen arouses a yet greater love.

powerful influence on devotion and thereby prepare the way for a religious vocation.

As we have indicated, the virtue of religion enjoys the peculiar privilege of being able to command more by way of appeal the operations of the theological virtues. Thus the virtue of religion can command an act of meditation on the goodness of God manifested in the life and acts of Christ and centered in the theme of the vocation ideal of service. Envisioned is the establishment of Christ as the model of religious at once embodying the highest ideals of the religious life and throughout the pages of the Gospels voicing His invitation to men of all walks of life. On the positive side, the virtues required for vocation would be seen personified in Christ, and the motive for striving to acquire them would be their power to make us Christlike in life and works. Negatively, the norm having been established in Christ, anything discovered in oneself that does not square with the ideal would be rooted out.

Certainly there is nothing novel about this formula for removing the impediments to devotion. Basically it pays tribute to the time-honored Christian idea of making Christ the center of one's life; and in its repressive features, it is simply a restatement of the importance of self-knowledge acquired by an examination of conscience. Simply enough, it is an attempt to establish a unity of spiritual life, to simplify and order one's life to the service of God, to unravel the tangled skeins of a complex existence.

b. *Conditions of magnanimity.*

(1) *Primary act.* Although certain definite causes may be assigned for the act of devotion, this seems to be impossible in the case of magnanimity's primary act of tending toward things absolutely great. Because this virtue is the ornament of all the virtues⁸ and perfects men not according to the common state, but according to an eminent state,⁹ it requires as the condition of its exercise a relatively unimpeded operation of the other virtues. Presupposing the ease, facility, and delight that comes from accomplishing the ordinary works of the virtues, magnanimity seeks to render these virtues greater.¹⁰ Consequently an already vigorous life of virtue, implying the successful application of the basic ascetical practices of the Christian life, is the indispensable condition of a full and perfect operation of the virtue of magnanimity. Of course, it is possible, by reason of the various material factors that incline more to the acts of particular virtues than to others, to visualize the case of an individual who is magnanimous in performing the works of a single virtue or at most of a few virtues to which he is inclined. Such would be the condition of a penitent sinner who seeks to embrace the religious life as a means of great penance or of more readily avoiding the occasions of sin in the cloister than in the world. In general, however, and under ordinary

⁸ Cf. *Ethics*, IV, l. 8; *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 129, a. 4 ad 3.

⁹ Cf. *Summa*, Ia IIae, q. 65, a. 1 ad 1.

¹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, IIa IIae, q. 129, a. 4 ad 3.

circumstances, a certain fullness of virtue is required that magnanimity may actually realize its primary act of tending to the great works of the virtues.

(2) *Secondary act.* Certain definite elements, on the other hand, may be isolated as subjective conditions for the exercise of magnanimity's secondary act of moderating the passions concerned with great honors. On the positive side, the vehement opinion of a person's ability to perform a particular great work that confidence (*fiducia*) affords is indispensable. A twofold element is involved here: hope is presupposed and to it is added a quality of strength, a vigor proceeding from a greater conviction.¹¹ Evidently, then, the conditions required for these elements must be regarded also as conditions for magnanimity and consequently for religious vocation.

Now hope, both as a passion and as a theological virtue, presupposes a desire for a good object,¹² which in turn presupposes love and knowledge of that object,¹³ in the case of religious vocation the religious state. Since this object is, furthermore, a difficult one possible to be attained, hope requires also the knowledge that a person can obtain this object either through his own power or through the power of others.¹⁴ Specifically, this knowledge is a kind of belief or faith residing in the cognitive faculties and redounding to the appetitive

¹¹ Cf. *ibid.*, a. 6.

¹² Cf. *ibid.*, Ia IIae, q. 40, a. 1.

¹³ Cf. *ibid.*, a. 7.

¹⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, a. 2 ad 4.

powers, the irascible appetite, where it is known as *fiducia*.¹⁵ Hope itself has its own certitude,¹⁶ and to this certitude confidence adds a special quality strengthening it by reason of a vehement opinion that one's own ability and the helps to be expected from others, principally God, are sufficient to attain the desired good.¹⁷ Accordingly, that magnanimity might moderate the passions in the genesis and growth of religious vocation, the following conditions are necessary: (a) knowledge of the religious state, the penetrating knowledge that serves as a material factor of religious vocation; (b) desire for the religious life; (c) hope to be able to meet its demands; (d) a hope strengthened by the firm conviction that the virtues already received and the helps to come from God will actually sustain one in leading this exacting way of life.

Among these conditions a definite order is to be perceived. Whereas knowledge and desire are ordered to the generation of hope, the firm conviction of available strength and help is ordered to its perfection. Hence hope itself as the end of the other conditions is the pri-

¹⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, ad 2.

¹⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, ad 3; IIa IIae, q. 18, a. 4.

¹⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, IIa IIae, q. 129, a. 6 ad 1. It is to be noted that hope in one's ability, while distinct from the theological virtue of hope which looks to God as its object, nevertheless, does not abstract completely from God. It is hope in one's own powers under God (*Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 128, a. un., ad 2) that constitutes the object of confidence (*fiducia*) as it is an integral part of the infused virtue of magnanimity. Again, since the supernatural virtues constitute the principal element in a person's faculty to lead the religious life, confidence as operative in religious vocation depends primarily upon God given helps, those already given, the virtues, and others to come in the future.

mary condition of magnanimity, a fact evident also from magnanimity's tending to difficult things, the proper object of hope. Considerable practical importance in the matter of religious vocation, therefore, must be assigned to the causes of hope. St. Thomas has listed among these causes those things which make men consider that it is possible for them to attain the arduous goods desired through their own power or with the help of others.¹⁸ Experience holds chief place among the factors testing one's own ability,¹⁹ "for it is by experience that man attains the power to do something easily,"²⁰ and learns that certain things which in the past may have seemed impossible to him are actually within his power.²¹ Where personal experience is lacking, the knowledge may be supplied at second hand by the teaching, counsels, and persuasions of others.²² As will be seen, St. Thomas has applied these conclusions about the causes of hope to the matter of religious vocation in insisting that the best way to test a religious vocation is by attempting to learn how to lead the religious life in a novitiate and that other men by their counsel can contribute to the genesis of a religious vocation. Lest the obvious be overlooked, he also places special emphasis on the power of confidence in God to cause hope.²³

Love, too, in the natural and in the supernatural

¹⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, Ia IIae, q. 45, a. 3.

¹⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, q. 40, a. 5.

²⁰ Cf. *ibid.*

²¹ Cf. *ibid.*, ad 1.

²² Cf. *ibid.*

²³ Cf. *ibid.*, q. 45, a. 3.

order, is the cause of hope, for nothing is hoped for unless it first be loved and desired.²⁴ Again, so far as hope expects to obtain help from someone else, in the matter of religious vocation principally from God, it looks upon the one from whom help is expected as a definite good and thus leads to love of Him, and this love in turn causes greater hope.²⁵ In this process from hope to love to greater hope, meditation upon God's mercy and power contributes to religious vocation.

On the negative side so far as it represses passions contrary to hope, but positive in the condition it produces in the subject, security establishes that peacefulness of mind and freedom from anxiety necessary for an act of magnanimity.²⁶ This condition is ensured by security's removal of fears that lead to despair and personal disgust.

c. Conclusion. By way of summary of the factors contributing to religious vocation by positively influencing the exercise of the virtues of magnanimity and religion, the following list is offered.

1. Charity emerges as the most important cause; it is both the principle of devotion which elicits religious vocation and the cause of the vigorous hope necessary for magnanimity, the indispensable condition of religious vocation.

2. Hope also is of immeasurable importance in in-

²⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, q. 40, a. 7; IIa IIae, q. 17, a. 8.

²⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, IIa IIae, q. 64, a. 4 ad 3; q. 17, a. 8.

²⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, q. 129, a. 7.

creasing love and in strengthening the magnanimous person to seek the great and difficult good of the religious life.

3. The necessity of meditation is enhanced when we consider that it is the cause of acts of love and hope and consequently of devotion and magnanimity.

4. A penetrating knowledge of the religious life and one's ability to lead this life and a vehement opinion of the helps to be derived from others, principally God, are also necessary.

5. Personal experience or the teachings, persuasions, or counsel of others may supply the necessary knowledge; experience affords the facility that comes from customary action.

6. Peace and restfulness of mind coming from security afford the mental condition necessary for thoughtful consideration. In a particular way, however, meditation may be singled out as the individual's personal, positive contribution to religious vocation; instructions and persuasions are the ways open to other men to influence vocation.

2. Negative Causes (*Removens Prohibens*)

a. *Impediments.* To the various factors influencing religious vocation positively by prompting devotion or magnanimity or at least by establishing the conditions necessary for the exercise of the two virtues required for religious vocation, several other elements must be added, elements that have the negative effect of removing impediments. As we have shown, devotion requires

spiritual cleanliness and tenacity of purpose as conditions for its exercise. Opposed to spiritual cleanliness in a special way are all debasing contacts with inferior things, particularly sins of the flesh and the "consideration of things not apt to awaken love of God,"²⁷ because these things debase the mind and thereby destroy the purity necessary for applying the mind to God. Against tenacity of purpose are pitted all things that contribute to presumption and prevent a man from totally surrendering to God because he trusts too much in his own powers.²⁸ Likewise laziness or spiritual sloth, which issues in torpidity in regard to precepts,²⁹ in negligence,³⁰ and in instability,³¹ must be listed as one of the chief impediments to the prompt willingness of devotion to serve God according to the demands of the religious state.

It seems to be true also that the same conditions and the same impediments may be listed for magnanimity's act of tending to great things. It seeks things that are absolutely great; hence it must have clarity of vision and will not tolerate having itself blinded by small, inferior things. It strives likewise for such arduous goods that a will doubly strengthened by hope and *fiducia* is required. To this tenacity of purpose are opposed by excess the unholy daughters of what may be called the pride of complacency, presumption, ambition, and vain-

²⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, q. 82, a. 3 ad 1.

²⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, a. 3.

²⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, q. 35, a. 4 ad 2.

³⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, ad 3.

³¹ Cf. *ibid.*

glory;³² by way of defect is opposed pusillanimity, which has the following causes: on the part of the intellect, a person's ignorance of his faculty, that flows from laziness;³³ and on the part of the appetite a fear of failure that flows from pride, the pride of timidity involving too much trust in one's false judgment of one's own inadequacy.³⁴ Since fear gives rise also to despair,³⁵ a mitigated kind of despair manifested in self-disgust must also be listed as an impediment to magnanimity and consequently to religious vocation.

Accordingly, on the basis of opposition to devotion and to magnanimity, the following list of special impediments to religious vocation may be drawn up.

1. Undue contacts with inferior things and consideration of them take away the condition of spiritual cleanliness that belongs to devotion and magnanimity.

2. The pride of complacency that spawns presumption, ambition, and vainglory is opposed to the second condition of religious vocation, tenacity of purpose.

3. Also opposed to this tenacity are laziness or spiritual sloth and the pride of timidity involving fear and mental anguish, and giving rise to personal disgust.

b. *Remedies.* The remedy in general is mortification or the active purification of the faculties: of sensuality, in the case of impediments to spiritual cleanliness; of the will, in regard to impediments to tenacity of

³² Cf. *ibid.*, q. 130-32.

³³ Cf. *ibid.*, q. 133, a. 2 ad 1.

³⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, a. 2 ad 2; 2. 1 ad 3.

³⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, Ia IIae, q. 45, a. 2; IIa IIae, q. 129, a. 7.

purpose.³⁶ In a practical way this mortification will center in observance of the precepts in an attempt to avoid all mortal sins, deliberate venial sins, and, to the extent possible, even all imperfections. Briefly, one is simply removing the impediments to a more generous service of God.³⁷ Positively, it consists in establishing the motives and the conditions of the infused virtues opposed to these various impediments.

In particular, the various remedies proposed by St. Thomas specifically against sins of the flesh are suited to remove the impediments to spiritual cleanliness. In his *The Perfection of the Spiritual Life* (chap. 9), St. Thomas has furnished a detailed account of the various impediments to continency, their sources, and their remedies. Here it is sufficient to summarize his teaching in this matter.

The first group of impediments involving acts of concupiscence which have their source in the body and are increased by pampering the body, is to be counteracted by fasts, vigils, and cessation from softness of living. On the part of the soul, lascivious thoughts and desires, especially those which are concerned with particular persons, place serious obstacles to continency and hence to the condition of spiritual cleanliness. Flight from these occasions of sin rather than direct opposition is the general admonition in this regard.³⁸ Many other

³⁶ For the necessity of mortification in general, cf. Rev. Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., *The Three Ages of the Interior Life*, I, 275 ff.

³⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 333 ff.

³⁸ Cf. *The Perfection of the Spiritual Life*, chap. 9; and Garrigou-Lagrange, *op. cit.*, I, 335.

remedies are proposed of which "the first and most important is that the mind be occupied with the contemplation of divine things and with prayer."³⁹ Specific mention is made also of reading and study of Sacred Scripture, occupation of the mind with fruitful thoughts, exercise of the body, and a final emergency measure of focusing the attention of the mind on absorbing and disturbing thoughts. Among external persons and things impeding continency are included the sight of members of the other sex and frequent conversations with them. Desistance from such familiarity is the sensible remedy offered.⁴⁰

The special impediments to tenacity of purpose may be reduced to laziness and the single root of pride producing the two trunks of pride of complacency and pride of timidity. Essentially an inordinate appetite of one's own excellence,⁴¹ pride admits of various grades and modes of manifesting itself. In its extreme form it consists in complete rebellion against God, a rebellion epitomized in the cry of the faithless Israel, "I will not serve."⁴² A mortal sin, this extreme pride renders religious vocation impossible by depriving a person of its principles, grace and the virtues. In its mitigated forms

³⁹ Cf. *ibid.*

⁴⁰ A more detailed account of common prophylactic and curative remedies will be found in Franciscus Ter Haar, C.S.S.R., *Casus conscientiae*, I, 112-23. The successive chapters devoted to the "Active Purification of the Senses, Imagination and the Memory" by Father Garrigou-Lagrange, *op. cit.*, I, 332-52, may be consulted profitably.

⁴¹ Cf. *Summa*, IIa, IIae, q. 162, a 3, a.2 ad 2; Ia IIae, q.84, a.2; *II Sent.*, d.5, q.1, a.3.

⁴² Jer. 2:20.

where movements of pride precede the judgment of reason and are not fully assented to,⁴³ its note of rebellion is preserved but its malice is lessened. Vocation is not impossible, but it is impeded to some extent since the determination of will to serve God, the tenacity of purpose necessary for religious vocation, is weakened.

Pride has its gross and palpable manifestation in that self-love or complacency which gives rise to presumption, ambition, and vainglory, the three special impediments to magnanimity by way of excess. Against this pride of complacency the most effective remedy is meditation on the fatherhood of God resulting in the practical recognition of the majesty of God and in reverence for Him, the motive of humility's subjection to Him.⁴⁴ Thus one comes to know the truth contained in the words of Christ: "Without Me, you can do nothing."⁴⁵ Likewise a sincere and intimate knowledge of oneself as a creature and as a sinner will establish the rule of humility, the knowledge of one's defects.⁴⁶ Practical recognition of the divine majesty and of human deficiency and dependence leads to reverence for God, and reverence issues in humility's complete surrender to Him.⁴⁷

Again, an incentive to one who is considering entrance into religious life to carry on the purification of will and intellect involved in rooting out this form of pride may be found simply by indicating the incompat-

⁴³ Cf. *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 162, a. 5.

⁴⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, q. 161, a. 3 ad 1; a. 2 ad 3.

⁴⁵ John 4:5.

⁴⁶ Cf. *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 161, a. 2.

⁴⁷ Cf. Garrigou-Lagrange, *op. cit.*, I, 385 ff.

ibility of some of the daughters of vainglory and the religious state. Vainglory leads to the presumption of novelties, whereas the religious life is based on time-tested, continually recurring religious observances. The religious life requires docility, obedience, peace, and harmony; vainglory runs its course through pertinacious clinging to one's own opinion, disobedience to the precepts of superiors, to discord and contention.⁴⁸

Another insidious form of pride hides under the cloak of a false humility and expresses itself in a desire for small things.⁴⁹ This is the pride of timidity that produces the pusillanimous soul.⁵⁰ Because the person in his pride clings to his own opinions and his own erroneous judgment of his abilities, he is at the mercy of that fear of failure which will prevent him from accomplishing anything so difficult as attempting to lead the religious life. Since pride is at the root of this impediment to religious vocation, the remedy of meditation on the mercy and power of God the Father, the source of all grace and power, must again be applied.

Not only pride but also laziness or spiritual sloth that prevents a person from considering his supernatural faculties is capable of producing the faint-hearted individual,⁵¹ who will not be generous in his service of God. Here the spiritual sloth in question is not *acedia* in its strict sense of sadness about a divine good which is

⁴⁸ For a list of the daughters of vainglory, cf. *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 132, a. 5.

⁴⁹ Cf. Garrigou-Lagrange, *op. cit.*, I, 379.

⁵⁰ Cf. *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 133, a. 2 ad 3.

⁵¹ Cf. *ibid.*, q. 35, a. 4 ad 2.

contrary to charity.⁵² This sloth, when it is fully and perfectly realized in the soul, constitutes a mortal sin depriving the soul of its spiritual life and the principles required to elicit acts of virtue and consequently religious vocation. Here we are concerned with spiritual sloth in its wide sense of laziness or bored tedium in the presence of a spiritual good that involves labor and imposes burdens upon the body that hinder its delectations.⁵³ A rather common vice as daily experience shows, this laziness saps the generous, magnanimous spirit,⁵⁴ and leads to tepidity, the tepidity condemned by God.⁵⁵

Whereas against sins of luxury the best attack consists in a prudent retreat from the scene of the battle, against spiritual sloth and laziness the best tactics dictate a direct frontal attack.⁵⁶ The incitement to sloth arises from a lack of perfect consideration of the spiritual good in question; hence, simply by considering these spiritual goods more thoroughly, by meditating on them, they are rendered far more pleasing, attractive, and desirable to men. From desire flows the will to work for them, and this spells the defeat of sloth. The application of this remedial principle to those who are somewhat fearful of deciding to embrace the religious life because of the labor involved in this way of life, demands simply greater attention to the spiritual nature of the religious

⁵² Cf. *ibid.*, a. 2.

⁵³ Cf. Prümmer, *op. cit.*, I, 296; *Summa, loc. cit.*

⁵⁴ Cf. Garrigou-Lagrange, *op. cit.*, I, 389 ff.

⁵⁵ Cf. Apoc. 3:16.

⁵⁶ Cf. *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 35, a. 1 ad 3.

state, its perfection, helps, and rewards. For those, too, whose ignorance of their ability to lead the religious life constitutes an impediment to the generous spirit required for religious vocation, the same obvious remedy of diligent examination of their spiritual faculties must be applied.

By attacking pride and the ignorance that results from laziness, the very roots of timidity, the more proximate cause of pusillanimity, are exposed and subjected to remedial measures. Fear itself, however, must be considered and dealt with. That a person who seems to be fitted for religious life by nature, grace, and nurture, hesitates to decide despite his inclination to this way of life and, perhaps also, even his desire for this way of life, points to some kind of fear as the basis of his doubts and the immediate impediment to religious vocation. This fear, of course, must bear upon some object which he considers an evil that can be overcome only with difficulty.⁵⁷ Since the religious life will be considered an evil only by a thoroughly ignorant or malicious person, it may be safely assumed that the object of the fear is not the religious life itself but something connected with it or with the individual himself. On the one hand, the labors and difficulties involved in leading the religious life may be regarded in themselves to some degree as an evil, a fact which indicates that at the root of this fear lies spiritual sloth. The way of life itself is desirable, the individual is not quite generous enough to make the sacrifices demanded; in short, he is afraid of the work

⁵⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, Ia IIae, q. 41, a. 2.

involved.⁵⁸ For this kind of fear, the remedies against laziness must be applied. Successful application will remove the impediment; failure in this regard after many attempts may well be interpreted as a sign of an unsuitable candidate precisely because he is lacking in the necessary generosity or magnanimity.

On the other hand, the labors involved may be considered an evil not precisely because of their inherent difficulties but because of the peculiar difficulties they present to a particular person. This points to some defect in the subject as a material, dispositive cause of his fear.⁵⁹ Perhaps it is only a confusion of the mind that prompts this fear, e.g., one is fearful lest he fail in the religious life and thereby commit grave sin or give scandal; ⁶⁰ or the fear may be attributed to the fact that the person mistakenly expects to be able to see in clear detail the final outcome of his action.⁶¹ Again, a sinner's shame for past sins may lead him to consider himself unworthy or incapable of leading the religious life.⁶² If a person lacks the experience of religious life, he may magnify the difficulties to the extent that they seem to be beyond his ability ⁶³ or seem to make extremely foolish the taking of the necessary steps to ensure a successful religious life.⁶⁴

⁵⁸ This species of fear is called by St. Thomas *segnities*, laziness. Cf. *Summa*, loc. cit., a. 4.

⁵⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, q. 44, a. 1, 2.

⁶⁰ This is fear of *erubescencia*, shamefacedness. Cf. *ibid.*, q. 41, a. 4.

⁶¹ Here the fear involved is *admiratio*, amazement. Cf. *ibid.*

⁶² This fear is known as *verecundia*, shame. Cf. *ibid.*

⁶³ This is the fear of stupor. Cf. *ibid.*

⁶⁴ Anxiety, *agonia*, is the species of fear described here. Thus a

For a simple malady, objectively considered, a simple remedy may be prescribed. A defect of knowledge and of hope is at the root of this fear. Taking steps to supply the defect of knowledge, e.g., indicating the source of the power necessary for religious life, the precise malice involved in scandal resulting from leaving a novitiate, the impossibility of truly fearing the possibility of falling into sin, the nature of the religious life as a form of penance, and so on; the supplying also of sound motives for hope—these are the fundamental general remedies. Since these various manifestations of fear are the basic problems involved in the cases to be considered later, this general indication of the remedies to be applied is sufficient for the present.

B. *External, instrumental causes.* The necessity of deliberation prior to the act of devotion which elicits religious vocation; the need for penetrating knowledge of one's own faculty and the helps to be derived from God to lead the religious life, the motives for confidence; the need for instruction to supply motives for hope and to remove defects of knowledge that lead to fear and other impediments to religious vocation: all these are guaranties that men can prepare themselves for religious vocation. So too, because men can prepare themselves, the help of other men by way of counsel, instruction, and persuasion becomes important adjuncts, instruments to manifest in time the eternal de-

particular instance of each species of fear has been indicated in the text.

cree of God. In other words, men can line up with God to serve Him and other men in making known the secret of divine election, in keeping open the ordinary channels of the precious gift of a religious vocation.

Certainly, therefore, vocations can be fostered; and in view of the Church's needs, they must be fostered. Moreover, since, as has been seen, habits of life constitute a most important element of religious vocation, specifically a subjective, material element contributing to the genesis of a religious vocation, the process of fostering cannot start too early in life. Sown early, the seeds of vocation will flourish only if their first tender shoots are nourished wisely and prudently, and carefully preserved from forces that tend to kill them. A note of urgency is added when we consider that these hostile forces are both external, the circumstances and spirit of the modern world, and internal, wounded fallen nature.

1. Family's Role in Vocation

a. *General influences.* Can any one human individual or social institution be singled out as an all-important instrument in the work of fostering vocations? One society can, and has been, so designated. "The first and most natural place where the flowers of the sanctuary should almost spontaneously grow and bloom, remains always the truly and deeply Christian family. Most of the saintly bishops and priests whose 'praise the Church declares,' owe the beginning of their vocation and their holiness to the example and teaching of a father strong

in faith and manly virtues, of a pure and devoted mother, and of a family in which the love of God and neighbor, joined with simplicity of life, has reigned supreme. To this ordinary rule of divine Providence, exceptions are rare and only serve to prove the rule." **

Indeed, there is an equation between family life and divine vocation, a condition expressed clearly by Bishop William A. Griffin.

In any Catholic parish let family life be weak, then parish life must be weak and vocations to the priesthood and the religious life will be unheard of. Let family life be strong, then whole parishes will rest securely on its strength, their Catholicity will be militant and articulate, and vocations will be numerous and fruitful. This does not mean, of course, that God will vouchsafe a religious vocation to a child of EVERY good Catholic family; for then there would be as many vocations in a parish as there are good Catholic families. But it does mean that God always looks upon the devoutly practicing Catholic family as the nursery of vocations to the priesthood and religious life.**

Certainly the example of holy parents sincerely and devotedly practicing their Catholicism in a spirit of generous sacrifice and love of the Cross will affect the impressionable mind of a child and foster in his will a reverence for God. Surely too, careful protection of the child's faith and virtue, the God-given purifiers of the soul, cultivates that cleanliness and wholesomeness of soul that are needed for devotion and for magnanimity. Moreover, parental insistence on the child's practice of

** Pope Pius XI, *op. cit.*, pp. 77 f.

** Most Rev. William A. Griffin, "The Family, Nursery of Vocation," *Follow Christ* Vocation Number, pp. 1 f.

religion definitely leads to the establishing of the firmness and tenacity of purpose which flow from a vigorous, loving embracing of God, the second condition of devotion's promptitude and magnanimity's desire for great things. All of these, ordered directly and immediately as the exercise of the virtues of religion and magnanimity, undeniably contribute to the genesis of a religious vocation by purging the mind and will of all obstacles. But the family's chief contribution to religious vocation is to be found within the family circle itself, in its exercise of the family's proper virtue, piety.

b. *Special influences.* Like the virtue of religion, piety also is concerned with an unpayable debt, extending to parents, the principles of being, reverence, and subjection as religion does to God.⁶⁷ Within the limited field of the family circle, then, piety performs the same tasks and has the same effects as does the virtue of religion in the wider family circle that calls God our Father. Thus, as religion offers service of God as a protestation of faith in Him and love for Him, so piety is concerned with honoring parents and searching out means of proclaiming openly a child's love for his parents.⁶⁸ In thus subjecting the child, piety in this very act perfects him by putting him in proper relation to his superiors. Demanding cleanliness and stability for its own exercise, this family virtue ensures that these qualities necessary for a religious vocation will be present, should God call.

⁶⁷ Cf. *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 80, a. 1, 4; q. 101, a. 4; q. 102, a. 1.

⁶⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, q. 101, a. 3 ad 1.

In a real sense, therefore, piety thriving in a family makes the home a nursery of vocation.

Because this is so, vocation campaigns, to be effective, must never fail to take a long range view by laying the foundation for future vocations in the homes of today. Moreover, to concentration on the positive side of the family's contribution to vocation outlined briefly above, there must be added serious efforts to uproot some dangerous attitudes of mind that grow like weeds even in the minds of good, Catholic parents.

c. Dangerous attitudes. The most important of these attitudes have been singled out by Pope Pius XI.

It must be confessed with sadness that only too often parents seem to be unable to resign themselves to the priestly or religious vocations of their children. Such parents have no scruple in opposing the divine call with objections of all kinds; they even have recourse to means which can imperil not only the vocation to a more perfect state, but also the very conscience and the eternal salvation of those souls they ought to hold so dear. This happens all too often in the case even of parents who glory in being sincerely Christian and Catholic, especially in the higher and more cultured classes.⁶⁹

All too frequently the child's joy in the knowledge of a vocation possessed is matched by the parents' great sigh of pity: "Poor thing, he does not know what he is giving up." No longer does it occur to parents what their child will be getting, an opportunity to follow Christ. For them, the monastery door and the cloister walls represent a tomb; they have not seen or heard how

⁶⁹ Pope Pius XI, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

much life there can be in a convent. The sharp words of Christ addressed to the disciples who prevented the little children from coming to Him, now tempered somewhat but equally foreboding, have been repeated by His vicar on earth to interfering parents: "A long and sad experience has shown that a vocation betrayed—the word is not to be thought too strong—is a source of tears not only for the sons but also for the ill-advised parents; and God grant that such tears be not so long delayed as to become eternal tears." ⁷⁰

2. Priest's Role in General

Naturally and almost spontaneously blooming in the truly and deeply Christian family, the flower of vocation normally will reach its full bloom under the protecting hands of a careful gardener, the parish priest. To discard the metaphor, he is the one who will be called on to supply the solid doctrinal basis upon which the individual may deliberate in preparation for his choice of a state in life. The momentous character of the decision to be made, the finality of choice involved in deciding the course of an entire life, the realization that he is actively engaged in serving as an instrument of God in manifesting a divine decree made before time began, all these should impress on the priest's mind the dignity and the corresponding obligation of the office he is performing when instructing his charges about the various states of life. It need hardly be stated that such instruction ought to be given and given correctly.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 79 f.

III. PRIEST'S ROLE IN PARTICULAR

A. *As preacher.* In a general sermon or exhortation on religious vocation, the religious state should be pointed out as a form of service to God accepted by Him as objectively the more perfect state. This theme of service and perfection, or better, perfection through service, carries with it all the aura of generous self-sacrifice, the motives of devotion and magnanimity, without prejudice to the apparently more earthly, but definitely supernaturally wholesome, appeal of abundant rewards accruing to this state of perfection. To adopt this theme in preaching is to follow the example of Christ, of St. Paul, and of the early Fathers, all of whom presented the invitation to follow the counsels not by threats but by indications of the rich rewards attached to this holy, difficult way of life.⁷¹

Moreover, care should be taken to impress upon the minds of the hearers that the manifestation of God's vocation will not, at least ordinarily, be accompanied by any extraordinary illuminations of the mind and movements of the will. On the positive side, the individual must be instructed to carry out his part of prayerful and careful deliberation on his suitability to follow the way of the counsels.

⁷¹ Cf. *Contra retrahentes*, c. 13.

B. *As Counselor.*

1. Suggesting

It is in individual consultation and instruction given to his penitents, however, that the priest's most effective work will be done. In this regard it is well for him to keep in mind that his actions in inducing others to embrace the religious life, provided that they bear no taint of force, simony, or deceit, merit a great reward.⁷² Suarez's teaching in this regard is worthy of note. He says:

If violence, deception, and simony are ruled out, St. Thomas thinks it is *per se* a good work to persuade another, by good and solid arguments, to become a religious. . . . Nor does he think it amiss to use other human means to gain the affection of another, not indeed to persuade him by human motives, but to induce him more readily to take heed of supernatural motives and reflect on them. However, as has been said, though in itself this is not wrong, yet we must be careful not to go too far, lest we employ a sort of moral violence or deception. Moreover, we must fear the danger of inconstancy in anyone so persuaded, because later, changes having occurred, he may easily have changed his inclination also. The reasons which first moved him will later be forgotten or have no further influence. Therefore there is need of great prudence in using this method of leading another to the religious state. When anyone asks for advice, we must freely tell him the exact truth. Furthermore we must help him whom the Holy Spirit has begun to move, so that he will remain firm in his purpose, or at least not resist the Holy Spirit, but rather dispose himself by prayer and good works to be more readily moved by Him.⁷³

⁷² Cf. *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 189, a. 9.

⁷³ Cf. Suarez, *De religione*, tr. 7, Bk. V, chap. 8, no. 10.

Suarez's injunction that a spiritual director should prudently moderate his attempts to influence a person to become a religious has its most evident application in the case of those who seem admirably fitted by nature and grace for the religious state, but who have never ventured to discuss the matter with their confessors. Certainly the director will have to be insistent that such persons select some state of life to give them the quiet and stability essential to leading the Christian life. Moreover, he will have to point out the person's suitability for the religious life, the benefits and excellence of this state, and the fact that his suggestion is to be accepted as a particular application of the Gospel's general invitation to follow the way of the counsels. To proceed beyond this point to the extent of urging such an individual to enter some religious institute ought not to be done without serious consideration of the various possible ways in which this exhortation may be received.

In the matter of urging to religious life, the director must keep in mind that he is not dealing with a heretic or infidel to be converted, but with one of the faithful who is confronted with the choice of one of several states of life acceptable by God. Hence to insistently spur on to higher things youths who, although apparently well equipped by nature, training, and grace for the religious life, yet are content for the moment to retain their state among the laity performing some office useful to the Christian community, would be to court danger. In this case, repeated urgings might well be interpreted as

moral coercion. Certainly it will serve only to agitate the subject and cause a disquiet of soul which constitutes an impediment to security and consequently to religious vocation. In fact, such a procedure might well be useless, since a suggestion to follow the counsels can have no desired effect unless the person is drawn interiorly by God.⁷⁴

As we have indicated, however, this drawing need not take the form of an extraordinary inclination, but may be manifested in an act of devotion bearing upon the religious life as its object. Since human deliberation and counsel have their place preparatory to such an act, exhortations may be resorted to; indeed, they may be necessary particularly in the case of timid souls, who are reluctant to decide anything without the studied advice of their confessor.

2. Counseling

a. *Well-disposed aspirant.* Necessary for the act of devotion which constitutes the essence of a religious vocation, human deliberation may well seem an all-important factor. Moreover, its importance is enhanced when we consider that few things in human affairs surpass in difficulty the self-abnegation and desertion of the world demanded by the decision to enter religion and to stay there. Considerations of this kind led some of the contemporaries of St. Thomas to conclude that, since deliberation is required in deciding upon the arduous factors encountered in human life, therefore the deci-

⁷⁴ Cf. *Contra retrahentes*, c. 9.

sion to enter the religious life must be preceded by lengthy deliberation and the acceptance of counsel from many directors.⁷⁵

In confirmation of their conclusion, they pointed to St. John's insistence on the necessity of "proving the spirit" to determine its divine origin,⁷⁶ to the danger of deception, and to the somewhat frequent ending of a religious vocation in apostasy.⁷⁷ For them, and quite unfortunately these arguments still have their proponents, repeated seeking of counsel and also protracted deliberation alone would guarantee the firmness of the resolve to enter religion and to stay there.

Stated this way, the error of the conclusion becomes gross and palpable. Admittedly, human deliberation normally does enter into the genesis of a religious vocation, for an act of election is involved. But no amount of human deliberation can account for the essentially supernatural act of devotion by which a man freely and firmly resolves to follow the way of the counsels in the religious life. This is the work of the Holy Ghost, "and just as this firm resolution is inspired by the Holy Spirit, who is the spirit of fortitude and piety, so too by the same Holy Spirit, who is the spirit of counsel and science, deliberation is ministered interiorly."⁷⁸

Consequently the basic principle which should regulate a spiritual director's counseling of one who is firmly resolved to become a religious is that little or no

⁷⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, c. 8.

⁷⁶ I John 4:8.

⁷⁷ Cf. *Contra retrahentes*, c. 8; *Summa*, *loc. cit.*, a. 10, 1st obj.

⁷⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, c. 10.

counsel is required.⁷⁹ Protracted deliberation and counseling are called for in matters of great doubt; this case, however, is stamped with the marks of certitude, and "certain things do not need discussion."⁸⁰

First of all, it is certain that entrance into religion is the greater good, and to doubt or deny this fact is to call into question the veracity of Christ Himself.⁸¹ Secondly, there can be no doubt that the power required to carry out the resolution to become a religious will be made available by God.⁸² Finally, one who has resolved to enter religion, certainly knows his own intention, and has no valid reason to doubt that it comes from God.⁸³ That this resolution must be traced ultimately to God hinges on the fact that it bears upon something good, and consequently, regardless of its proximate causes, it has its source in God, the cause of all good. God alone can, and must, move the human will to freely move itself in making a choice. In this regard, St. Thomas considers the objection that, since the devil often suggests good things to man with the intention of deceiving him, consequently counsel and deliberation are required to escape the danger of deception. In his response the Angelic Doctor insists that the peril to religion vanishes

⁷⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, c. 9.

⁸⁰ Gloss on I Thess 5:21; *But prove all things* (quoted by St. Thomas, *Contra retrahentes*, c. 10, ad 3).

⁸¹ Cf. *Contra retrahentes*, c. 9; *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 169, a. 10.

⁸² Cf. *ibid.*; *Summa*, *loc. cit.*

⁸³ Cf. *ibid.*, c. 10; *Summa*, *loc. cit.*, ad 1; Suarez, *op. cit.*, tr 7, Bk. V, chap 8, nos. 4 ff.; St. Alphonsus, *On the Choice of State of Life. Complete Works; Ascetical Works*, 5th ed. (French translation by R. P. Dujardin), III, 410.

when one recalls the limited field in which the devil can influence a man: he may suggest through the senses or even deceive them; he cannot move the mind or will from the intention of leading a good life. Hence, even if the devil were to suggest entrance into religion, there would be no danger involved in assenting to this suggestion, for it is good. God alone can move the mind and will of man to assent to this suggestion, and it is solely through God's internal motion that the suggestion becomes efficacious. Consequently "the intention to enter religion, regardless of who suggests it, is from God."⁸⁴

Since an act of an infused virtue is involved in religious vocation, which presupposes the existence of grace in the soul, a fact which cannot be known with absolute certainty, the certitude that the resolution to become a religious comes from God is no guaranty that a supernatural vocation has been given. In this matter the general theological norms concerned with proving the possession of grace must be applied. Thus, short of a special revelation of God, one cannot be absolutely certain of having sanctifying grace. Only that imperfect knowledge based on signs (the preference of divine things to temporal ones, joy and peace in making the choice, non-consciousness of mortal sin, and so on) is possible.⁸⁵

What, then, does this certitude guarantee? Only this, the fact that God has called. How He has actually extended His invitation, through grace, through natural

⁸⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, c. 10 ad 4.

⁸⁵ Cf. *Summa*, Ia IIae, q. 92, a. 5.

causes, through angels, both good and bad, eludes man's knowledge.

Perhaps, too, the fact that a person can be certain with objective certitude that he really desires to be a religious will be called into question. Is there not a possibility of self-deception here? The answer is simply, that a man knows that he knows; he knows his own mind, his own intentions.⁸⁶

These facts must be accepted by the director as certain and serve as his basis for giving whatever counsel may be needed. It is not his duty to question one well disposed⁸⁷ in an attempt to "prove the spirit"; this is the exclusive duty of those in the religious institute who are charged with testing a vocation.⁸⁸ A fundamental principle is involved here: a spiritual director is not a novice master and should not act as one.

If the candidate, then, is well disposed, i.e., is firmly resolved to become a religious and gives evidence of relying upon God's power to sustain him in this new life, no questions should be raised about the existence of a divine vocation. Nor should the possibility that natural motives have entered into the decision of the individual cause undue concern. Human motives are not necessarily a sign of a false vocation but only a sign that a man has been called. Accordingly, if the aspirant's motives

⁸⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, ad 2.

⁸⁷ "Well disposed" is taken here in Cajetan's sense and consists in two elements (1) a firm resolution; (2) confidence (*fiducia*) that God will supply the power to persevere in religious life. Cf. Cajetan, *Commentary* on IIa IIae, q. 189, a. 10.

⁸⁸ Cf. *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 189, a. 10 ad 1; *Contra retrahentes*, c. 10, ad 3.

are mixed, the director should attempt to ensure by his counsel that the supernatural ones are given the primacy. But if, on the other hand, it becomes obvious—a somewhat unlikely eventuality—that a purely human motive, e.g., human affection for the brother or sister who taught the aspirant in the seventh grade, desire to make parents happy, the attempt to shroud some disappointment in life in a religious garb, holds first position, then the director ought to advise the aspirant not to enter religion until his motives have been purified. In general, however, the confessor or director should keep in mind that the period of probation and the canonical novitiate which all candidates must undergo are designed especially to test, and to discover, the shaky foundations of improper motivation. It is here that they will be bolstered or will collapse entirely.

"The candidate's resolution should be firm, and hence it is generally demanded that it be proved for a length of time sufficient to demonstrate its stability." ⁸⁹ Unfortunately the author of these words has not explained what enters into the process of testing the firmness of an aspirant's resolution. Generally speaking, however, it may be stated that no test should be imposed which requires the candidate to fulfill the precepts in the world, before he attempts to follow the counsels in religion.

At first blush, it might seem good common sense to insist that a man be proved first in doing the easier task, keeping the commandments, rather than to permit him

⁸⁹ Vermeersch, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

to court trouble for himself by assuming the more difficult burden, observing both the commandments and the counsels. Precise theological analysis reaffirms partially this supposition of common sense, for the observance of the counsels which always presupposes the observance of the commandments is at once more difficult and more perfect than simply keeping the commandments. Hence, since the imperfect exists for the perfect, it seems that a man should prove his ability on the precepts before he tests his metal on the counsels.

Admittedly, the relation of perfect and imperfect will be found between the counsels and the precepts. But the difference between keeping the counsels and observing the commandments is not simply one of degree but of kind. A complete and total difference of mode of life is at stake. For St. Thomas the following of the counsels which implies that the commandments are also kept is compared to simple observance of the commandments as a perfect species to an imperfect species.⁹⁰ As perfect, then, the counsels including the precepts are indeed more perfect and prior by nature to the less perfect common observance of the commandments. Nevertheless, it is not necessary that any priority of time be assigned to the latter imperfect mode of life, just as it is not necessary that a man be an ass before he becomes a human being, or that a man be married and learn about the delights of marriage before he begins to practice virginity.

Again, actual practice of the counsels is, by its very

⁹⁰ Cf. *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 189, a. 1 ad 5; *Contra retrahentes*, c. 7, ad 11.

nature, ordered to the principal precepts of love of God and neighbor as means to an end, not as indispensable means (for then one would have to observe the counsels before he could love God) but as a convenient way of keeping the commandments more readily and more perfectly.⁹¹ Hence failure to present a clean record of perfect observance of the commandments may never be set up ordinarily as a barrier to entrance into religion, nor be established as a test for aspirants.⁹²

Furthermore, in proving the firmness of an aspirant's resolution, the director must keep in mind that his tests are being conducted in the world, in an environment which can, at worst, be positively hostile to a desire for religious life, and at best of little help. St. Thomas' judgment on the relation of the world of his day, a time of strong faith, to the perfection sought in religion should give good reasons for pause to counselors who must conduct their tests in a more or less pagan milieu: "It is not necessary for a person first of all to keep the commandments in the world before entering religion; especially as the worldly life does not dispose one to religious perfection, but is more an obstacle thereto."⁹³

As for a positive norm, the proper field for the testing of the firmness of a resolution on the part of a well-disposed subject has been clearly defined and ably

⁹¹ Cf. *ibid.*, q. 184, a. 3; *III Cont. Gent.*, 130; *Contra retrahentes*, c. 6; *Quaes. quodl.*, II, a. 24 ad 2.

⁹² Cajetan's injunction to be cautious in admitting those who have been addicted to enormous vices must be kept in mind. Cf. Cajetan, *loc. cit.*, a. 1.

⁹³ Cf. *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 189, a. 1 ad 5.

stated in the following. "The normal thing to do is to hold off a prospective candidate, first testing his religious spirit, his youthful generosity, his dispositions and aptitudes, noting the kind of companions he associates with, watching his spirit of prayer, and marking his frequentation of the sacraments." ⁹⁴

All of these, plainly enough, are signs of the moral integrity and strength of the aspirant, the sources upon which the genuineness and the durability of the desire depend to a great extent. Equally clear also is the fact that each may be reduced to the factors listed as the material elements of a religious vocation, without doing violence to any of them.

On all the points thus far considered, little or no counsel and testing is required for one who has a firm intention to embrace the religious life. As far as he is concerned, the important factors have been settled and lifted out of the category of doubtful things. Where, then, will counsel be needed? St. Thomas admits of two elements that will move a candidate to seek counsel: (1) the presence of some special impediment which prevents entrance into the novitiate; (2) the choice of a particular form of religious life and of a particular religious community.⁹⁵

In both cases the Angelic Doctor maintains that prospective candidates may look for the advice of others from whom they have reason to hope that they will receive help and not hindrance. To help, not hinder (*pro-*

⁹⁴ Felix D. Duffy, C.S.C., *op. cit.*, p. 26.

⁹⁵ Cf. *Contra retrahentes*, c.9; *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 189, a. 10.

sint et non impediunt) may be singled out as a norm for those who are called upon to guide others in meeting the emergency arising from the existence of a special impediment. To meet the requirements of a helpful director, therefore, the priest will need to have a working knowledge both of the impediments which by the common law of canon 542 invalidate or make illicit admission into a novitiate and those which may have been added by the various institutes. At least he will have to know that some religious institutes may have drawn up a list of impediments, a factor which will influence considerably his advice on the communities to be considered by various candidates. Again, other non-legal impediments may arise which will often tax the ingenuity of a director and perhaps also his pocketbook. For his own sake, then, the counselor may find it profitable to investigate the nature of the *Regina Cleri Society*, the possibility and the advisability of establishing an active group in his own parish, and so on.⁹⁶

The fact that a priest or confessor will be called upon from time to time to aid a candidate in making a prudent choice of a particular religious institute imposes on him the obligation of being acquainted with the particular aims and means of the more common forms of religious life and the qualifications required by each. Likewise it presupposes that he has the ability to evalu-

⁹⁶ For information on this society, consult the following articles: Rt. Rev. Louis C. Vaeth, "The Regina Cleri Society," *The Missionary Union of the Clergy Bulletin*, 1945, pp. 63-70; Rev. Jude Senieur, O.F.M. Cap., "The Regina Cleri Society," *M.U.C.B.*, June, 1946, pp. 26-29.

ate properly the aptitudes and talents of his charge which make him more suitable for one institute than for another. Again, since the ultimate aim of the choice is to pick a community in which the candidate's vocation will be given full opportunity to prove itself, to grow, and, God willing, to be completed by the pronouncing of the vows, the director should be acquainted with the general tone of religious observance prevailing in the various religious communities, which in the past have attracted, and may be expected to attract in the future, the majority of persons from his particular locale. Excellent advice is given in this regard by Lessius, who says:

Regarding the order (to be chosen by a candidate ready to embrace the religious life), five things are to be considered:

First, whether the essential vows are observed, so that there be no private property and no superfluity; that there be no exemptions and no freedom to live as one pleases.

Secondly, whether the religious discipline is observed. This is shown by the religious bearing (of the members), by the reverence they show at divine service, by their modesty in company, by their guarded speech, their moderation at table, silence in the house, quiet in the rooms; in fine, by the exact observance of the rule as it applies to external conduct. Nothing is more beautiful and nothing more edifying than the exact observance of the rule.

Thirdly, whether there is harmony and brotherly unity. For where there are hatreds and discord, there not Christ, but the devil dwells. It is a sign of harmony if the members consort amicably, if they respect one another, if they help one another, and if each speaks well of the other.

Fourthly, whether ambition has no place there. The religious state is a school of humility and mortification. Hence ambition,

by which dignities, prelacies, or honorable positions are desired, is as a violent poison to the religious state. . . .

Fifthly, there might enter into consideration also this question: Whether that order has the Apostolic mode of life. St. Thomas says this is the most perfect mode of life, as it combines the contemplative life with the very excellent work of saving souls, in imitation of Christ and the Apostles. Therefore, other things being equal, this mode of life is to be preferred.⁹⁷

Since many religious institutes are actively engaged today in a valiant and praiseworthy attempt to ensure future recruits by appealing to the ideals of dramatic generosity and self effacing sacrifice of relatively young boys and girls, the confessors of these youth are being called upon more and more to supply the necessary direction and safeguards for these incipient vocations. Frequently the institutes, for reasons best known to themselves, are reluctant or unable to provide juniorates and apostolic schools. Again, there is an appalling lack of responsible agencies promoted within diocesan limits in the United States to provide for the needs of such youths. Thus, in June of 1946, at the Vocational Conference held by the Missionary Union of the Clergy and the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, in the discussion that followed the reading of Father Aloysius F. Coogan's paper on "The Missionary Union of the Clergy and Vocations: A Plan: Diocesan Director for Vocations,"⁹⁸ Father Coogan reported that the results

⁹⁷ Lessius, *On the Choice of a State of Life*, nos. 53 ff. (quoted in Vermeersch, *op. cit.*, pp. 60-62); cf. also the admonitions of Cajetan in his *Commentary* on *Ila Ilae*, q. 189, a. 9.

⁹⁸ Father Coogan's paper will be found in *Vocation Conferences*, M.U.C.B., 1946, pp. 61-70; the discussion on this paper will be found in *Priest's Discussions on Vocations*, 1946, pp. 33-41.

of the Union's checking upon diocesan directors of vocations showed that there were no more than six who might be given such a title and only two who merited it in the strict sense. Hence the demands upon the priest confessor will grow proportionately as the stream of vocational literature increases and produces its expected results.

Since the world hardly qualifies as a cloister and it would be highly unreasonable to expect youths to pitch tents in the desert or along the seashore or to build huts in the woods of the local parks that they might live as monks and hermits until canonical age has been reached, the director will have to estimate carefully the dangers to vocations in his neighborhood and to prescribe both preventive measures and powerful antidotes. The general classes of impediments to the act of devotion from which vocation flows and to magnanimity, the condition of religious vocation, have already been considered, and the means of increasing devotion and magnanimity and removing impediments to them have been indicated. In a general way, then, both poisons and antidotes are known; particular applications will depend upon circumstances.

Before concluding this consideration of the counselor's task in directing a person who has firmly resolved to enter religion, a word of caution must be added. In fact, the caution has been given already, but it is important enough to merit repetition. Boldly stated, it is this: the director should not attempt to do a novice master's job. Upon them and upon other religious superiors

charged with the office of admitting candidates to the novitiate or to profession lies the obligation of "testing the spirit," of taking into account the abilities, capabilities, and the possibilities for improvement offered by a candidate, of developing these factors in the environment best suited for such work, the novitiate. The standards of acceptance according to which the judgments are made are determined for them by the particular rules of the institute and the determinations of the common law.⁹⁹ In this regard, it is well to note too, that the common law imposes no test so rigid and exacting that only a few can qualify for the religious life. In fact, any Catholic who is free from impediments established by law, who is moved by the right intention, and who can bear the burdens of religious life, may be admitted to the novitiate.¹⁰⁰

Although a firm resolution to enter religion provides the note of certainty that makes protracted deliberation needless, this cannot be said of every desire for the religious state or every inclination, impulse, or attraction to it. Nor, on the other hand, can this lack of firmness be seized upon as an evident sign that a person has not been called. In reality, this lack is a challenge to the zealous director to discover the proximate sources, the doubts or fears, that account for the defect of intention in the already existing inclination, so that, through his prudent counsel, this prospective candidate may properly estimate his vocation.

⁹⁹ Cf. can. 538.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. can. 565.

b. *Doubtful aspirant.* Generally speaking then, in dealing with persons who are inclined to enter the religious life but have not yet fully resolved to do so, the director must accept again as his starting point the fact that the inclination has a good object, and that consequently, regardless of its proximate source, it must be traced ultimately to God. Having satisfied himself that all legal impediments are absent and that the natural endowments rendering a person suitable for the observance of the counsels are present, he may turn his attention to the task of analyzing the proximate source of this inclination and discovering the reasons for the lack of a firm intention.

Here it is necessary to keep in mind the various ways in which a vocation to religious life may be manifested to an individual. In some instances true vocations have their source in some interior attraction or divine instinct. Hence, when a person is conscious of an internal impulse, the ordinary measures adapted for the discernment of spirits must be employed.

Therefore, as St. Ignatius tells us in his *Exercises*, in proportion as these interior impulses cannot be explained by natural mental process, and in proportion to the amount of peace they bring to the soul, or the frequency with which these impulses come to a man without disturbing him, in the same proportion are we safe in judging these impulses to be of divine origin. . . . If we find someone who tries to disregard these interior impulses and vainly struggles against them, so that they are not checked but remain, as it were, dormant and soon break out again as he vainly seeks to be freed from them, we must conclude that the voice of God impetuously calls him to better things, and that he

has the grace which can lead him to make the firm resolution that is the positive sign of a vocation.¹⁹¹

In the case of those who have been moved to desire the religious life by the action of the Holy Ghost working through the gifts in their advanced stages or through an extraordinary actual grace, both of which are eminent modes of operating grace, the desire itself coupled with evident signs of intense devotion, and a haziness of motive points to a divine origin. Vagueness of motivation will be present, since here it is a question of a grace operating in a superhuman mode and previous to deliberation; intensity of devotion will be a sign of an advanced state of perfection of soul with its consequent perfection of the gifts of piety and science, a source of divine vocation.

Most frequently, however, the desire for the religious life will be an act of devotion following upon deliberation centering about the religious life and the person's ability to lead this life. In these cases, motives will be more or less sharp and well defined, and, although possibly mixed, will carry a supernatural flavor. Here the director need be concerned only with establishing, as far as this is possible, that the individual is in the state of grace to assure himself of the presence of an incipient divine vocation.

Having discovered the seeds of the resolution to enter religion, and having satisfied himself of its probable supernatural origin, the counselor's task is now that of

¹⁹¹ Quoted in Vermeersch, *op. cit.*, pp. 55 f.

cultivating the seeds and bringing them to fruition, if possible, in a firm resolution. What is preventing this desire from attaining its perfect state of a firm intention? This is the problem that must be given careful consideration.

Some of the possibilities accounting for this defect of intention have been indicated already in the consideration of the impediments to the act of devotion and magnanimity from which vocation flows. Thus all those inferior things which distract the mind from the things of God, which debase it and tend to remove that purity necessary for applying the mind to God, and all those things which contribute to self-confidence or presumption and thereby restrain a man from surrendering to God wholeheartedly, all these effectively block a firm resolution to enter the religious state. Clearly enough, it would be foolish to look for impediments of this kind accompanying a vocation that owes its origin to the operation of the gifts of the Holy Ghost in their advanced stages, for the operations of the gifts themselves remove these impediments. They may be found, however, by reason of recently past habits, in those who experience an internal impulse, and in those whose vocation is the product of the infused virtue of religion.

The principal remedies, as indicated above, are: meditation, the root cause of devotion on the human side, primarily on the sacred humanity of Christ; exercise of the virtues of religion and magnanimity to remove the accretions of past habits, and of the virtues of

humility and hope to repress self-sufficiency and presumption.¹⁰² Should the remedies fail to produce the desired effect after a reasonable length of time, and offer no hope of eventual success, the director should inform his charge that his judgment is that no divine vocation has been granted. Furthermore, he should point out that any recurrence of this desire for the more perfect life, unless it should be extremely intense, should cause no scruples or regrets later in life. This desire may well be satisfied in the world by occasional practice of the counsels.

It may happen that a sort of mixed effect results from the use of these remedies. Thus an individual's devotion may increase and express itself in a more fervent desire to serve God, but not in the religious life. For at the same time another inclination to the married state, to the secular priesthood, to the lay apostolate, or to some office useful to the Christian community may express itself and increase along with devotion. As a consequence, he or she is continually wavering between the desire for the better life and some other state or office consecrated or at least respected by the Church. Superficially the case seems to present one of those insoluble problems, where evidence is equally divided for choice of either alternative. Actually, however, the evi-

¹⁰² Cajetan, *Commentary* on IIa IIae, q. 189, a. 10, recommends a whole series of practices involving the virtue of religion in order to remove impediments to the required good disposition of a candidate. Should the exercises fail to produce their intended effect, the candidate should not enter religion, for he is not disposed.

dent increase of the inclination to serve God in a state other than the religious life settles the matter in favor of the other state. On the one hand the note of firmness characteristic of religious vocation is absent; on the other hand, the virtue of religion is beginning to assert its claim to be productive of vocation to all the states of life wherein a person performs the works of mercy as protestations of subjection to God.

Other obstacles to firmness of intention arise owing to defect of knowledge concerning the religious life and resulting in fear or doubt. Here a few of the more common misconceptions will be considered.

Not infrequently youths, appalled by the evident difficulties of religious life, and impressed by the apparent sanctity of some religious they have known somewhat intimately, manage to combine the two notions in such a way that heroic sanctity becomes the condition and not the effect, or at least, the goal, of religious observance. Consequently, lacking this holiness in their own lives, however much they may cherish the life of a religious, they are both fearful of taking the decisive step and doubtful of their own vocation. To calm such a fear and settle the doubt should prove an easy enough task. This much must be admitted as true: the youth's reasoning would be valid if the difficulties of religious life in general or of a particular form of it flowed from the heroic nature of the work attempted in religion. Then, clearly, the obligations of such a life could be imposed solely on those who were ready, willing, and able to perform works of heroic nature, i.e., upon those

who are advanced in virtue, and never upon the imperfect.¹⁰³

Indeed, this is an important factor entering into a director's counsel upon the form of religious life to be chosen by the aspirant, since the magnitude of the work attempted by the various institutes differs and makes corresponding demands of its subjects. In general, however, religious life does not center its activities in heroic works which require heroic sanctity. Rather its great works are those that issue a challenge to a generous or magnanimous spirit. The difficulty of religious life is not that of heroic works but that of restraint (*difficultas cohibitionis*),¹⁰⁴ and consequently more to be desired than feared by one who, being imperfect in virtue, seeks to become perfect. Viewed in this light, therefore, the solution of such a doubt consists in giving instructions upon the penitential character of religious life, placing the emphasis upon the counsels, vows, and religious exercises as means for avoiding the occasions of sin.¹⁰⁵

In so analyzing the nature of the religious life, the director may forestall another doubt, closely allied to the preceding one, which occurs frequently. Here it is a question of doubting one's ability to meet and overcome the difficulties of restraint imposed by the rule and constitutions of a religious institute. Again, a grain of truth must be admitted to be present. Were a person to rely solely on his own powers to sustain him, then he

¹⁰³ For a detailed account of the nature of heroic works, consult Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., *op. cit.*, I, 180.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. *Contra retrahentes*, c. 7, ad 4.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. *ibid.*; *Summa*, 11a 11ae, q. 189, a. 1; *Quaes. quodl.* IV, a. 2.

would have valid reasons to fear. Those who enter religion, however, trust not in their own powers but in the help of the power of God to whose grace all things are possible.¹⁰⁶ To those who are fearful in this regard, St. Thomas offers as a guide to be followed St. Augustine's account of his own foolish fears and their resolution:

On that side whither I had set my face, and whither I trembled to go, there appeared to me the chaste dignity of continency, . . . honestly alluring me to come and doubt not, and stretching forth to receive and embrace me, her hands full of multitudes of good examples. There were so many young men and maidens here, a multitude of youth and every age, grave widows and aged virgins. . . . And she smiled at me with a persuasive mockery as though to say: "Canst not thou what these youths and these maidens can? Or can they either in themselves, and not rather in the Lord their God? . . . Why standest thou in thyself, and so standest not? Cast thyself upon Him; fear not, He will not withdraw Himself that thou shouldst fall. Cast thyself fearlessly upon Him: He will receive and will heal thee."¹⁰⁷

Indoctrination in this regard may elicit an assent that is, unfortunately, speculative only, and by no means practical. As is true in all practical matters, experience itself is the best teacher. Cajetan undoubtedly had this in mind when he prescribed as a remedy for those who are not properly disposed, i.e., those who do not place their confidence fully in God, prayer, performance of the corporal works of mercy, confession, frequent reading of the Scriptures, and listening to sermons.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Cf. St. Thomas, *Commentary on the Gospel of St. Matt.*, c. 19; *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 189, a. 10.

¹⁰⁷ St. Augustine, *Confessions*, Bk. VIII, chap. 2 (quoted by St. Thomas, *Contra retrahentes*, c. 9); *Summa*, loc. cit., ad 3.

¹⁰⁸ Cajetan, *Commentary on IIa IIae*, q. 189, a. 10.

Should these remedies also fail, and fail miserably, to enkindle the proper spirit of confidence, the director's course is clear: he must advise against entrance into religion. But when the treatment offers some hope of success, the director should be guided by St. Thomas' dictum, a principle applicable in most cases of doubtful vocation: "It is better to enter religion with the purpose of making a trial than not to enter at all, because by so doing one disposes oneself to remain always."¹⁰⁹

Again doubts arising from the fear of possible apostasy after profession or of having to leave the novitiate because of unsuitability for the life may be the root causes of a person's hesitation in coming to a decision. Certainly apostasy itself should be feared and avoided for the evil that it is; but one must never lose sight of the fact that it has its evil in itself and does not draw upon the religious life to supply its malice. Secure and certainly good in itself, religion and religious vocations bear rotten fruit only when the soul in which the seed of the divine invitation has been planted has been poisoned, and only the individual himself can poison his own mind and will.¹¹⁰

Furthermore, the foolishness of hesitating, or of deciding not to become a religious because of possible apostasy becomes evident when the same type of reasoning, or better, lack of reasoning, is applied to vocation to the Christian life. On the same grounds of possible de-

¹⁰⁹ *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 189, a. 4 ad 1.

¹¹⁰ Cf. *Contra retrahentes*, c. 10, ad 5.

fection, infidels would be justified in refusing to embrace the Christian faith.¹¹¹

Because perseverance in religious life is considered to be a sign of a true vocation, all too frequently the mistake is made of concluding that lack of perseverance is the sign of lack of vocation. As a matter of fact, perseverance has nothing to do with vocation itself, just as there is no radical connection between perseverance and faith. One can have the faith and then give it up, as well as one can be called to religious life and afterward leave. In each case perseverance is an added divine gift. There is a great difference to be noted, however. In the case of faith, man must throw it away in order to lose it; ¹¹² whereas man can lose a religious vocation both through his own fault and without any fault at all on his part.

No difficulty at all is encountered in seeing the possibility of a culpable loss of vocation. Since vocation is an act of a virtue, the continued existence of which depends upon the presence of grace in the soul, the loss of grace through mortal sin carries with it the loss of vocation. Perhaps the loss may be only for a time, and the divine call is sounded again with the return to grace. But there is no guaranty of its return, and therefore mortal sin must ever be the mortal enemy of a religious vocation. Again, since the medium of the virtue of religion, which is vocation radically, is determined on the

¹¹¹ Cf. *ibid.*

¹¹² Cf. Philip F. Mulhern, O.P., "The Rejection and Protection of the Faith," *The Thomist* (1941), III, 34.

basis of the human faculty with its endowments of nature, habit, and grace, failure to correspond with graces given to lead the religious life and infidelity to religious observances are likewise potent factors in the loss of vocation. Under such circumstances the ability of the individual to elicit the firm intention indispensable to religious vocation is curtailed. Restlessness, tedium, and discontent result and take their toll, although they might have been readily overcome through cooperation with divine grace.

Some difficulty may occur in grasping the fact that no fault at all may be involved in the loss of vocation. But the difficulty is subjective and by no means objective. Since the withdrawal of actual graces by God takes place here, some semblance of a real difficulty might be based on the observation of St. Thomas that whatever is granted by the grace of God is never recalled without guilt.¹¹³ That this principle has a limited application, however, is obvious from the transient nature of the charismatic gifts,¹¹⁴ and exception must be made also for religious vocation. St. Thomas is insistent upon the fact that a person's withdrawal from religion does not indicate the lack of a religious vocation; it simply means that, although the grace was given by God to enter religious life, the grace of perseverance was not.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Cf. *Summa*, IIIa, q. 5, a. 2.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Cajetan, *Commentary on III*, q. 5, a. 2.

¹¹⁵ Cf. *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 189, a. 10 ad 1; *Contra retrahentes*, c. 10, ad 6. The fact that perseverance is not included in the essential notion of vocation makes possible the following gradations of vocations. In the listing vocation is regarded as ordered to the pronouncing of vows by which one is established in the religious state; and the terms "suf-

A final doubt that may arise from the knowledge of the defectibility of religious vocation centers in the possibility of giving scandal by entering religion and then withdrawing. By the very fact that withdrawal does not necessarily involve any sin or evil intent upon the part of the one withdrawing, active scandal is excluded.¹¹⁶ The possibility of passive scandal, however, remains, not as a deterrent to entering into religion, but as a challenge to preachers to inform Catholics that entrance into religion is a noble act that loses none of its nobility by subsequent return to the world, an act licit, reasonable, and even necessary at times.

ficient and efficacious" indicate that the vocation, having all the elements of a true vocation, in the first instance does not attain this goal, whereas in the case of efficacious vocation the addition of the gift of perseverance ensures the attainment of profession of vows.

I. Sufficient religious vocation	<div style="display: inline-block; vertical-align: middle;"> <div style="display: inline-block; vertical-align: middle;"> a. External. General vocation recorded in the Gospels. (Dispositive only) </div> <div style="display: inline-block; vertical-align: middle;"> b. Internal. (Particular) </div> </div> <div style="display: inline-block; vertical-align: middle; margin-left: 10px;"> <div style="display: inline-block; vertical-align: middle;"> 1. Inclination to religious life. </div> <div style="display: inline-block; vertical-align: middle;"> 2. Firm resolution to enter religion. </div> </div>
II. Efficacious religious vocation	Religious vocation plus gift of perseverance.

For a more complete analysis of these gradations, see Marianus Maggiolo, O.P., *op. cit.*, pp. 304 ff.

¹¹⁶ Cf. *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 189, a. 4 ad 2.

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